

**Ps 23 (ESV)** The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. <sup>(2)</sup> *He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.* <sup>(3)</sup> He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. <sup>(4)</sup> Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. <sup>(5)</sup> You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. <sup>(6)</sup> Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

## 1. Review: What we've seen so far

- A. We started looking at this amazing passage from the pen of David
  - 1). A passage so filled with comforting promises – line upon line – truth to use in our lives
- B. We saw that these truths will do us no good if we don't use them
  - 1). The promises are useless if they just remain on the pages of Scripture – must be applied by faith
- C. We saw that the promises can only be used by those who are His sheep
  - 1). Those who have seen the guilt of their sin and have gone to Christ for salvation
- D. We saw these promises will only be enjoyed by those who follow Christ
  - 1). You can't take any path you want and expect it to lead you to God's blessings  
But if you'll follow Him as your shepherd – those paths He leads us on end up in blessing
    - a). He is leading you to green pastures and still waters – but you must go His way
- E. We left with the comforting thought of why He chose to call Himself shepherd
  - 1). Because He was taking on all that a good shepherd did for His sheep
  - 2). He was taking on the full responsibility of provision, protection and guidance

**Transition:** If you are His (Born again) AND if you are following Him then these next verses are for you

## 2. Our verse today is a wonderful picture of contentment and peace

**Look at the first part: Ps 23:2 (ESV)** He makes me lie down in green pastures.

- A. It is so important that sheep rest – or they get sick – they stop re-producing
  - 1). But sheep don't rest easily – they are timid – unless they are *free from all fear*  
AND *free from hunger* – they won't lie down – they are restless and agitated
- B. **Problem:** Sheep have no natural abilities to solve those two hindrances for rest – fear and hunger
  - 1). So it is the shepherd's responsibility to take care of these things for his flock

**Transition:** It's the same for us – fear and spiritual hunger will keep us from being able to rest

- A. Let's see how the shepherd took care of that for the sheep  
And how our shepherd takes care of it for us

# I. FREEDOM FROM FEAR

## 1. Sheep by nature are timid – sheepish - takes so little to frighten them

- A. A jack rabbit hops out from behind a bush – they panic – “What is that! I'm outa here”
  - 1). One starts running – rest follow – even if they didn't see the rabbit

**Point:** So the tiniest hint of danger spreads fear throughout the flock – and they can't lie down to rest

- A. Shepherds use many techniques to keep these threats away
  - 1). But there is one that is much more effective than all the rest (next point)

## 2. The presence of the shepherd will naturally calm the flock

- A. If they can just see him with them – that produces a quiet assurance that chases that fear away

**Transition:** It is the same thing for us isn't it – Christ's sheep

## 3. How do we lie down and rest in a world so filled with uncertainties?

- A. It seems like every day brings a new threat of some kind – financial, health (Zeka virus) – war - terrorism
- B. I'm always amazed at what people will cling to in an attempt to ease the anxiety

- 1). I found this on the internet – if your anxious try this....

Connect with something. Anxiety breeds in isolation. Connecting with a family member, a friend, a pet, or *even a tree* can help you feel less alone and often brings us out of the panic.

- B. Before I was saved did a lot of drugs – messed me up – suffered from panic attacks

- 1). I was tormented by my own mind – so I picked up a book on how to have peace

I was instructed to create a safe place in my mind – filled with favorite things I could retreat too

- a). Problem: I took myself in with me – and I was the problem – didn't work

**Thought:** Everywhere I go there I am – that's the problem isn't it

- A. Like those sheep I've discovered that I have no natural ability to make myself lie down

- 1). All the little clever techniques to psyche myself out have no lasting effect

- 2). I could fool myself for a while in that safe room in my mind – but the fear was too great

**Point:** The solution for resting is not man's techniques – bonding with a tree won't get it done

- A. Playing clever little mind games – positive confessions – faking a smile

- 1). That's all dependent upon me – it won't work – I'm the weak link

**Transition:** What does work for the believer?

#### 4. The solution is to look away from me. To gaze upon the shepherd

- A. When the sheep see their shepherd they relax – because they trust Him

**Scripture tells us this is how the Christian life is lived: Heb 12:1–2 (ESV)** Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside *every weight*, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>(2)</sup> *looking to Jesus...*

- 1). This is how we deal with spiritual weight – whether the weight of sin or weight of worry

**Listen to this one: Psal 16:8-9 (NIV)** *I have set the LORD always before me. (now watch what happens)* Because he is at my right hand, *I will not be shaken.* (9) Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; *my body also will rest secure...*

- 1). I can always tell when I've lost focus – lost sight of my shepherd

I become anxious - Many things that didn't bother me before suddenly do – I stop resting

- B. But when I've set my gaze on Him I rise above the circumstances

- 1). That's Peter isn't it: Out in the storm – waves are battering the boat – very frightening

- a). Jesus comes to them – walking on water – bids Peter to come to Him

- 2). Peter starts walking on the water – walking above that which frightened him moments before

- a). Until he takes his eyes off Jesus and looks at the circumstances – begins to sink

**Thought:** We see a powerful example of focusing on the shepherd in Habakkuk

**Hab 3:17 (ESV)** Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls,

- A. That's not good? What are you going to do Habakkuk? Panic – freak out – lose sleep

**Hab 3:18 (ESV)** yet (Here is the choice I'm going to make) *I will* rejoice in the LORD; *I will* take joy in the God of my salvation.

- A. He chooses to set his focus on the Lord – rather than circumstances – like the sheep with the shepherd

- 1). Trusting in who He is – that He has assumed full responsibility for his care and provision

“This looks really bad but I know who He is and what He has said”

- B. Does that work? Look at the next verse

**The result: Hab 3:19 (ESV)** GOD, the Lord, is my strength; *he makes my feet like the deer's;* he makes me tread on my high places.

- A. Wow! Feet like the deer's = sure footed – *stable* - able to traverse high mountains without slipping

- 1). When Habakkuk focused on the Lord circumstances didn't throw him about

- 2). He was dwelling in high places while others were being drug down into the pit

## 6. Summary: So how do we lie down in green pastures

- A. We don't try to work something up in us – we look away from us to our good shepherd
  - 1). Who He is – what He has done – what He has promised – *and rest is a by-product of that*  
**Mt 11:28 (ESV)** Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, *and I will give you rest.*
  - 2). You can't make yourself lie down – I will help you – I will give you grace so you can

**Transition:** Let's move to the second problem that stops sheep from being able to rest

## II. FREEDOM FROM FEAR OF HUNGER

### 1. Sheep cannot rest if they are hungry

- A. They become restless and agitated – they won't lie down because they are looking for food
- B. It was the shepherd's responsibility to provide food for the flock so they could rest

**Point:** We are the same exact way when we are spiritually hungry – restless – agitated – murmuring

- A. So the remedy is to eat what the shepherd has so carefully provided
  - 1). Now were back to the Word of God again aren't we?
  - 2). The shepherd has provided amply for our spiritual hunger through giving us His Word
    - a). When we are well fed we will be able to lie down

**Transition:** I want to show you two ways He does this – two ways He uses His word to satisfy our hunger

### Two Ways the Word is Used to Satisfy Our Spiritual Appetite

#### 1. Our shepherd uses the Word to prepare us to be fed with the Word

- A. A shepherd would work diligently to prepare his fields to plant seed to provide food
  - 1). Meant he had to remove all the stones that were there - for the ground to be ready for seed
- B. Jesus does the same thing in our hearts – He prepares our heart for the word by removing sin
  - 1). Sin hardens our heart so that we are unable to receive the seed of God's Word  
**Why God says: Jer 4:3-4 (NLT)** This is what the LORD says to the people of Judah and Jerusalem: *"Plow up the hard ground of your hearts! Do not waste your good seed among thorns. (4) Cleanse your minds and hearts before the LORD..."*
- C. What does the Spirit use to do that – to point out areas of hardness where sin has taken root  
**2 Ti 3:16 (ESV)** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, *for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,*

**Point:** When we open God's Word and ask Him to show us those areas of hardness

- A. Then respond to what He shows us – our heart is plowed – made ready to receive more of the Word

**Transition:** That brings us to the second way our Shepherd provides this food we need

#### 2. Our shepherd uses the Word to nourish us

- A. Through the Word He's doing two things: Clearing our heart of the stony ground  
AND He's planting those seeds that sink deep down and cause spiritual growth

**Point:** So He uses the Word to remove that which hinders growth

AND provide that which causes growth

- A. The word is the food the Christian needs for nourishment and growth

**1 Pet 2:2 (NASB)** like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, *that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,*

**Transition:** So we see the Word nourishes us so we grow – so we won't be restless - agitated  
But what does it nourish us with?

**THE NOURISHMENT THE WORD GIVES US IS CHRIST**

**TURN: Jn 6:35 (ESV)** Jesus said to them, ***“I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.”***

- A. He satisfies our hunger and our thirst – so we can grow – so we can lie down – be content
- B. Jesus uses a strange analogy to describe this

**TURN: Jn 6:53–56 (ESV)** So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. <sup>(54)</sup> Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. <sup>(55)</sup> ***For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.*** <sup>(56)</sup> Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.

- 1). He’s painting a picture of how dependent the believer is upon Him
  - a). Everything we need to live this life – to stay strong – to lie down comes from Him
- 2). He says He is that true food that energizes and sustains a healthy spiritual life
  - a). Just as food and drink work their way into every part of the body to nourish and strengthen
    - 1a). This means the believer is to welcome Him into every part of our life
    - 2a). Jesus and His truth is to influence all we are and all we do

**Point:** This is the path that leads to the green Pasture – to that rest – Christ saturated life

- A. The further He is removed from the center of your life the more impossible rest will be
  - 1). You’ll remain spiritually hungry – unfulfilled – unsatisfied
  - 2). The further you get away from that first love relationship – remember that – fight for that
    - a). Surround yourself with the things of Christ – show up at things like you used too!
 

**Rev 2:4-5 (NIV)** Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. (5) Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. **(The warning)** If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.

      - 1a). You lose His presence, His peace, His joy
    - b). One of the great things about witnessing – I must die to self and press near to Him!
 

Tithing does the same thing – it forces us to trust Him

      - 1a). I’ve discovered anything that causes me to trust Him and die to self is beneficial
      - 2a). Why you want to look for things that take you out of the comfort zone
- B. So when the shepherd is leading you to green pastures – ***He is leading you to Him! Or back to Him!***
  - 1). The rest you have is a rest that is found in Him

**Question:** When the shepherd provides this food – what is its main subject? Him

**Jesus after the resurrection: Lk 24:44 (ESV)** Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the ***Law of Moses*** and the ***Prophets*** and the ***Psalms*** must be fulfilled.”

- A. We know the NT is about Him – Jesus said the OT is too – Bible is a Christ saturated book
  - 1). OT looks forward – foretelling what Christ would do
 

The Gospels – showed Him doing those things the OT said He would

The epistles look back on what He did – explaining that work
- B. Colossians 3:4 says “Christ is our life”

**Listen to Paul work that out: Ga 2:20 (ESV)** I have been crucified with Christ. ***It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.*** And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

- 1). I died at the cross – now the life I live is by faith in Him
  - a). So close that the Spirit is actually living the life of Christ out in me and through me
  - b). Again so the joy I have is His joy – the peace I have is His peace – His contentment

**Summary:** So Jesus leads us to green pastures through His Word

- A. Those pastures are pictures of Him – He is our rest

**Already saw the first part – want to add one more verse: Mt 11:28–29 (ESV)** Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>(29)</sup> *Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

1). Draw near – unite yourself completely to me – let me lead and you will have rest

**Question:** How do we do that? We read His Word – believe it and apply it – NOW we are following Him

A. As we do that we find rest unto our souls – start lying down more and more!

**Transition:** Let's finish off this great verse

### III. HE LEADS ME BESIDE STILL WATERS

**Ps 23:2 (ESV)** He makes me lie down in green pastures. *He leads me beside still waters.*

**Intro:** Just as hungry sheep couldn't lie down neither can thirsty sheep – they become restless

A. If they can find a supply of good, clean water they will lie down and rest

1). If they can't they wander around until they find something

More than likely they drink polluted water filled with parasites and get sick

B. So just as a good shepherd will make sure they have enough food

He will also make sure they have enough water

C. Since they are sheep – of course water that is moving scares them!

1). So the shepherd will find still water or even damn up a spot with stones

**Transition:** It is the same for us – we have a spiritual thirst AND a thirst for life that must be quenched

A. Or we will be restless and unable to lie down

B. Fortunately our good shepherd has also met that need

#### 1. Where do Christ's sheep drink? Scripture tells us

**Is 12:3 (ESV)** With joy you will *draw water* from the *wells of salvation*.

A. First it is found in the *"Wells of salvation"* – Coming into a relationship with God through Christ

1). We draw up that water with joy – get saved and what joy there is!

**Jn 4:10 (ESV)** Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you *living water*."

a). Living water – where the thirst of man – the thirst for life is quenched

B. But how is it quenched? Where do we go to get these thirst quenching waters?

Where does this salvation that promises so much take us? Again! To HIM!

**Jn 7:37–38 (ESV)** On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, *"If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink."* <sup>(38)</sup> Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' "

**Thought:** I hope you're starting to get it – all the promises come from Him

A. We enjoy them when we go to Him – we fight off what steals our rest when we focus on Him

B. That thirst for life that we all have is satisfied in Him

**Transition:** I know this has been a bit repetitive but I think it's for our good that I repeat it

A. Why? We can so easily forget – we become complacent – stop guarding our hearts

#### 3. Listen to God's complaint against the children of Israel

**Je 2:13 (ESV)** for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

A. Water was rare in Palestine

They would carve out cisterns in the rock as reservoirs to collect the rain when it fell

B. Sometimes the rock walls of the cisterns would develop a crack = it would be a broken cistern

1). The water would seep out – all that work would be for nothing

- C. Here is what God was saying – How foolish can you be? I am the fountain of living water
- 1). Living water – water that refreshes – invigorates – energizes – is appealing  
The water in a cistern was stagnate – lukewarm – unappealing
  - 2). But you didn't bother seeking me the living water  
You try to be satisfied with cistern water  
BUT you constantly thirst because those cisterns of your own making leak
- Thought:** How many of us is God saying this too this morning
- A. You thirst for real life – for real joy – for real adventure
- 1). And you look past the only one who can give that to you – to satisfy you  
And you've tried to quench that thirst through your own plans – with what the world can give you
    - a). But there is cracks – the satisfaction keeps leaking out
- B. You build your dreams – you plan your plans and the world keeps frustrating them

## THE CALL: I AM CALLING YOU TO THINK THIS THROUGH

### 1. You can hear these truths – know they're right – yet never respond

- A. You keep thinking that eventually your planning will click – and bring lasting satisfaction
- 1). If I just meet the right guy or gal – buy the right thing – get the right job  
Hoard away some more finances -
    - a). But when you attain those things – the cistern still leaks – satisfaction is temporal
    - b). You remain restless – on the hunt – you can't lie down
- B. Keller says that Christians like that remind him of some sheep he was watching  
They remind me very much of a bunch of sheep I watched one day which were being led down to a magnificent mountain stream. The snow-fed waters were flowing pure and clear and crystal clean between lovely banks of trees. But on the way several stubborn ewes and their lambs stopped, instead, to drink from small, dirty, muddy pools beside the trail. The water was filthy and polluted not only with the churned up mud from the passing sheep but even with the manure and urine of previous flocks that had passed that way. Still these stubborn sheep were quite sure it was the best drink obtainable.
- C. How foolish when you can draw near to Christ and live the life your creator fashioned for you
- 1). What He called fullness of life – wow!

### 2. Fullness of life defined – wanting this is a no brainer

**John 10:10-11 (NKJV)** "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may *have it more abundantly. (11) "I am the good shepherd.*

- A. Abundantly - Per-is-soś in the Greek = exceeding abundantly above. Beyond measure. Superfluous.
- 1). In classical Greek = Over and above in every possible way, a more than sufficient amount, extraordinary, excessive, uncommon....
    - a). That is the Word Jesus chooses to define the life that He wants to bring to us
- B. The Expository Dictionary of Bible Words says this about this word translated "Abundant"
- 1). It refers to God's infinite capacity to act in ways that far exceed the limits of our imaginations.  
**What Paul said: Eph 3:20 (NIV)** Now to him who is able to do *immeasurably more* than all we *ask or imagine*, according to his power that is at work within us,
    - a). It is a life that is beyond what we could even imagine
      - 1a). Why? Because it is a life that is filled with Him!

**Thought:** That is why – in His loving grace – He is always trying to lead you away from the world to Him

**Col 3:1–3 (ESV)** If then you have been raised with *Christ*, seek the things that are above, where *Christ* is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>(2)</sup> Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. <sup>(3)</sup> For you have died, and your life is hidden with *Christ* in God.



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- A. Point: If you're a believer – risen with Christ - set your mind on that which brings you life
    - 1). It's not the things of this earth – keep a very light touch there – lock onto Christ
    - 2). We have to take care of things on earth – but they are not primary – He is
  - B. There you will find the rest you long for  
**Mt 11:28 (ESV)** Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, *and I will give you rest.*
  - C. There your thirst for life will be quenched  
**Jn 7:37 (ESV)** On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, *“If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.”*
- Thought:** There is no other way to know this satisfaction – I've said it a million times – it is worth repeating
- A. God created you to be satisfied in Him – nothing else is big enough to fill that void  
**Augustine:** “Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee.”
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## CONCLUSION

### 1. What a passage – so filled with blessing and comfort

- A. But it is to a select audience isn't it – it is for those who follow Him
    - 1). To those who draw near to Him – He will give rest and quench that thirst for life
  - B. I don't think any of this is for the part-time believer
    - 1). In church when it is convenient – has very little interaction with Christ through the week
    - 2). This is for those who are intentional – they've determined to set their sight on their shepherd
      - a). They have realized their own planning – what the world has to offer  
 Are those cisterns that leak – AND THEY WANT MORE!
  - C. So as usual the scriptures leave us with a decision – what will I do with this?
    - 1). Respond by turning my focus upon Christ – or keep living as a part-timer
      - a). I think it's a no brainer – the abundant life that God promises to give  
 Or the broken cisterns of my own making
- Point:** God has so much He desires for you – I pray you'll determine to put Him at the center of your life
- A. *The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
 Shall not want for rest or refreshment!*