



Sermon Title: Psalm 23 (Part 1)

IN Opportunities to connect and pray as a group

1. What was your image of God when you were a child? A teenager? Now?
2. How were you taught to deal with stress when growing up?

UP Time that is devoted to the Word of God

1. Throughout his poetry, David uses many metaphors for the Lord: (examples, Psalm 3:3; 9:16; 10:16; 11:1; 18:2). What is different about this metaphor, 'the Lord is my Shepherd'?
2. It is suggested that David wrote this Psalm during the time of 1 Samuel 16:7-12. Why is it significant that he chose 'shepherd'?
3. Study the four aspects of God's character that Pastor Henry teaches. Read through the Scripture verses. How would you explain these to the following people you might encounter:
 - a. a neighbour who is in distress;
 - b. your friend who is struggling with a bad habit;
 - c. someone who thinks God has forgotten them;
 - d. someone who doesn't believe in God's existence.
4. What does it mean to have a 'stubborn faith'?
5. The degree to which we experience these four attributes is up to us. Discuss.
6. Give an example of Romans 8:28 in your life, or in the life of someone you know.

OUT Seek to be the Community of God's people in your community

1. Tell about a time when you were in a 'valley' and experienced:
 - God's unconditional Love; His Power; His all-knowing (omniscience); His presence everywhere.
 To what degree have these experiences impacted your 'stubborn faith'?
2. How can the group pray for you as you call upon one of these attributes for your life this next week?

UP – IN – OUT reflect a balanced life including a focus on our personal relationship with the Father (UP), staying connected to the Body (IN), and reaching our world (OUT).

THE WORD (NIV)

Unconditional Love

Psalm 89:2; 145:19
 Jeremiah 31:3
 Luke 15:7
 John 10:11

All-powerful

Psalm 6:10; 8:1-4; 115:3
 Isaiah 40:28-31
 2 Corinthians 12:7

All-knowing

Psalm 31:7; 103:13; 139:3; 142:3; 147:4
 Matthew 10:20
 Luke 12:7
 John 10:27
 Romans 8:28
 1 John 3:20

Everywhere Present

Psalm 139:7-8
 John 15:5

Genesis 26:3 – Isaac
 Genesis 28:15 – Jacob
 Genesis 38:2,3,21 – Joseph
 Exodus 3:12 – Moses
 Joshua 1:6 – Joshua
 Matthew 28:20 – disciples
 John 15:14-15 – 'friends'
 Hebrews 13:5 – Us!!



We all dream of living the good life. Rarely does life turn out the way we hoped or dreamed. Sometimes we are left wondering if there really is a God and if there is, why is He standing around with His hands in his pockets. King David experienced this more than once in his life. As a young shepherd boy he was hunted down by King Saul and was forced to flee into the hill country to avoid being killed. (1Sam: 23). In 2 Sam 15 David's son Absalom rebelled against David's leadership and again David was forced to flee into the wilderness. David had enemies. He experienced fear, failure and deep regret and through all the fear, the shame, the hurt and the heartbreak he grew in humility and wisdom. Best of all, his trust in God grew. In God he found help, hope and healing.

In Psalm 23 David expressed what His shepherd, the Lord, had come to mean to him. When David refers to His Lord as His shepherd he is saying that His Lord is trustworthy. So - what kind of Lord is this Shepherd David came to trust?

First, the Shepherd David trusted is the Lord who loves us unconditionally. In Luke 15, we read the parable of the man who owns 100 sheep and when one of these sheep wanders off, he cares so much for it that he leaves the 99 to go and find the one that was lost. This is no different than a parent who will frantically search for their child who has gone missing. When the Shepherd finds the lost sheep he is overjoyed and celebrates finding this lost sheep with friends and family. We can all say with assurance - God loves ME. Psalm 145:17 says that the Lord loves all He has made. In John 10:11, Jesus says that He is the good shepherd that gives His life for the sheep and He does this on the cross of Calvary. Our Lord never stops loving us. (Jer. 31:3; Psalm 89:2) God will never love us anymore than He does right now; nor will He love us any less; His love and grace is not conditioned by our response. It saddens Him when we run from Him and when we make decisions that hurt us and others and out of love for us He continues to pursue us. When we stop running and turn around and in faith reach out to Him it feels like He has reclaimed His most valuable possession. (Luke 15:7)

Secondly, the Shepherd David trusted is the Lord who is all powerful. His power has no parameters. (Psalm 115:3) His power and strength is unending. (Isaiah 40:28) He has unlimited power which He displays through miracles of changed lives, healed bodies and restored relationships. His power is displayed through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. His power is evident in His creation. (Psalm 8) When one considers the vastness of God's creation, it can be overwhelming to realize that this all powerful God knows us, loves us and wants to be in relationship with us and He wants to share His power and strength with us. (Isaiah 40) In Psalm 6:2 David talks about being worn out and exhausted. Like David, we too experience exhaustion. We feel discouraged and powerless to do anything. The good news is that if we humble ourselves, admit our need and ask our Good Shepherd for help, He will strengthen and empower us to do what we could never do in our own strength. (1Cor. 12:7)

Thirdly, the Shepherd David trusted is the Lord who is all knowing. God knows everything there is to know. (1 John 3:20) He knows everything He created. (Psalm 147:4; Matt. 10:29) God knows everything there is to know about us. (Luke 12:7) God's eyes are always trained on us and He never blinks. (Psalm 139:3) God knows everything about what we are going through. (Psalm 31:7) He knows all about our disappointments, losses and hurts and He cares. (Psalm 103:13; Psalm 142:3) God knows the way we should go and if we ask Him, He will direct our steps. (Psalm 139) He knows us in every way and longs for intimacy with us.

Fourthly, the Shepherd David trusted is the Lord who is everywhere present. Like a shepherd who tends sheep, God is with us all the time and He knows us individually. He cares for us and protects us. There is nowhere in the universe where God is not. (Psalm 139) God is Spirit and He can be in all places at the same time. God is always fully present in our lives, every moment of every day. The degree to which we experience His presence depends on the state of our heart and how humble and open we are not only to hear from Him but to do what He says. One of the most repeated phrases in the Bible is God saying to His people - "I will be with you." This was His promise to Isaac (Gen 26), His promise Jacob (Gen 28) and His promise to Joseph. (Gen. 39) In Exodus 3, He calls Moses to be His instrument to rescue His people from slavery and God promises Moses that He will be with him and provide all that he needs. God extends this same promise to Joshua when he takes over leadership from Moses. (Joshua 1) Jesus promises all His followers that He will be with them always. (Matt. 28) In Hebrews 13:5 God promises all His followers, "Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you". When God promises to always be with us, what He is telling us that if we lean into Him, if we cry out to Him for help and strength He will empower us to do what we cannot do on our own. He will give us the strength to get through the storms of life. Jesus says, "I call you friends." (John 15)

In Psalm 23 David assures us that we do not have to face the difficult times in life alone. God does not promise safety or freedom from bad things but He does promise to be with us. Like David, we have a Shepherd who loves us, knows us and hears us. His power is available to us and His presence is with us always. We lack nothing and God gives us everything we need. We have His grace and forgiveness for every failure and regret. He directs our footsteps and is with us in every storm. He is a friend that will never leave us or forsake us. We may face times when the words, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I lack nothing" may seem empty and hollow and the only thing which will keep us going is a 'stubborn faith' that makes a flat out decision to go through the valley with Him, believing in His sovereignty and His goodness; believing He has our best interest at heart and can be completely trusted. Nothing else will work. Nothing else will bring relief or peace. It is either God or despair. There is nothing in between. David embraced the Lord by faith as his Shepherd and David put his full trust in Him and so must we.