

DSC Community Group
Sermon Summary, 12/18/2011

Title: "A Perfect Shepherd for Needy Sheep"
Series: "The Cross, The Crook, The Crown"

Text: Psalm 23
Preacher: Ryan Kelly

Jesus takes on many images in the NT, including that of a shepherd. To understand Jesus is in no small part to understand how he's like a shepherd. To understand Christianity is in no small part to understand something of how we're like sheep. A good way to ponder his coming at Xmas time is to think about his shepherd-likeness.

The LORD is my Shepherd (1a)

- "Lord"=Yahweh, Exod. 3; "Our" shepherd= personal;
- Characteristics of a shepherd: patience, care, strength, wisdom, sacrifice, intimacy
- Characteristics of sheep: needy, vulnerable, fragile, go astray, dumb

1. I'm content and well-fed (1b-2)

- Sheep lie down when there is no danger and they are well fed; still waters=not stagnant or contaminated, no dangerous current
- The path of true contentment: Ps. 16:11

2. He rescues me from death (3a)

- "Shepherds apparently know that one of the biggest dangers for sheep is when they become cast - i.e. flipped over on their back and unable to turn over. Sheep can die within hours. That is why shepherds count their sheep. The word "restore" in v 3 literally means to turn over."

3. He leads me in the right path (3b)

- He knows the right path for the sheep, which is a safe and trusted path.

4. He protects and comforts me (4-5a)

- Valley of the shadow of death = a valley of the soul which is as dark as death; the valley of deadly shadows; a dark valley and there's possible danger of thieves or predators; when death is imminent.
- Why no fear? "you are with me" "your rod and your staff, they comfort me"; Staff=walking stick for stability and direction; Rod=used to drive away predators and getting sheep's attention. Both are symbols of authority and care and strength.

5. He receives and cares for me (5-6)

- Table, oil, cup=Pictures of hospitality
- "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me..." = Not prosperity gospel. David doesn't assume that he won't have trouble in life. Remember, he's already talked about not fearing "in the valley of the shadow of death" because God is with him. He's already talked about sitting down at God's table while his enemies threaten. But God is merciful in the trouble. He is with him, and the green pastures and still waters are still there. He's still leading. Sometimes the trouble is God's good rod.
- "I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever", Ps. 27:4; Rev 21:3-4

6. He came and died for me (John 10:1-18)

- Bridge between Ps. 23 and NT: Ps. 28:9; Isa. 40:11; Mic. 5:2-5; Zech. 13:7
- Jn. 10:1-18; Lk. 15:4-7

Sample Questions

- Recall some of the characteristics of shepherds and of sheep that Ryan reviewed in his sermon.
- Are you restless or content? Does your contentment come from God's green pastures and still waters?
- Are you making up your own path? Are you being led by him? Do you rest in his commitment to his name?
- What dark valleys have you known? Where do you go for protection and comfort? What do you trust in? Do you trust him even in the darkest days? Do you know his rod and staff? Is he your comfort?
- Do you know Christ as your shepherd? Are you eager to "dwell with him" more and more deeply?