



## Changing Pastures

*Rev. Rick Anduzia*

- **Psalm 23:1-6**

*A Psalm of David.*

*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. [2] He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. [3] He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. [4] Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. [5] Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. [6] Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*

*Ps 23 AMP*

*1 THE LORD is my Shepherd [to feed, guide, and shield me], I shall not lack.*

*2 He makes me lie down in [fresh, tender] green pastures; He leads me beside the still and restful waters. [Rev 7:17.]*

*3 He refreshes and restores my life (my self); He leads me in the paths of righteousness [uprightness and right standing with Him — not for my earning it, but] for His name's sake.*

*4 Yes, though I walk through the [deep, sunless] valley of the shadow of death, I will fear or dread no evil, for You are with me; Your rod [to protect] and Your staff [to guide], they comfort me.*

*5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my [brimming] cup runs over.*

*6 Surely or only goodness, mercy, and unfailing love shall follow me all the days of my life, and through the length of my days the house of the Lord [and His presence] shall be my dwelling place.*

- The position of this psalm is worthy of notice. It follows the twenty-second, which is peculiarly the Psalm of the Cross.
- There are no green pastures, no still waters on the other side of the twenty-second psalm. It is only after we have read, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" that we come to "The Lord is my Shepherd."
- We must by experience know the value of blood shedding, and see the sword awakened against the Shepherd, before we shall be able truly to know the Sweetness of the good Shepherd's care.
- The oases of life: -- These sentences do not describe the regular and uninterrupted experience of those who follow the Great Shepherd. They are by no means always reclining in green pastures, nor being conducted by the restful waters. Moreover, life after such a pattern would be entirely unsatisfactory and insufficient. Green pastures and still waters would prove an unspeakable curse if life contained nothing else for us. How soon we should grow weak and indolent and useless. The text refers to the occasional privilege rather than to the common experience of the sheep of His flock.
  - David was passing through a time of sorrow, want, and wandering. And if the way of your life often seems to lie through the desert, you need not lose heart and hope. Following God's guidance, you will not be denied needful refreshment and rest. God will bring you to the oasis where the quiet waters lie, and the grass is fresh and green. He will discover to you some peaceful hour, some shady nook, some prepared table, where the soul may be refreshed and renewed. It would be easy to enlarge upon the many privileged occasions which, in our wilderness life, answer to "green pastures and still waters."
  - Dr. James M. Gray related how he saw a painting of a large boat laden with cattle that were being ferried across an angry, swollen river in time of storm. The artist had so cleverly pictured the dark, threatening clouds and the play of the treacherous, jagged lightning that he instantly concluded that the freight of the poor dumb cattle was marked for destruction. But the title of the painting was simply Changing Pastures.
  - Many times Christians imagine that God's plans mean disaster and affliction but He is only "changing pastures" for the good of His children.

- David knew what it was to be a shepherd and he knew the need of a shepherd in the life of sheep.

### **Fourteen Blessings of Sheep**

1. The Lord as their Shepherd (Ps. 23:1)
2. No want (Ps. 34:9-10; 84:11)
3. Rest in choice green pastures (Ps. 23:2)
4. Guidance to still, deep, waters of rest and refreshing (cp. Jn. 4:14; 7:37-39)
5. Restoration of soul (Ps. 23:3)
6. Guidance in paths of right for His name's sake, which gives no cause for stumbling, falling or going astray
7. Safe passage through the valley of the shadow of death -- the deep, waterless, gloomy, wild, beast-infested, rocky, dangerous ravine so common in Palestine (Ps. 23:4)
8. No fear of evil because of the Shepherd's constant companionship, watch, and protection
9. The comfort of the Shepherd's rod and staff (club and crook, the only two things carried by shepherds for defense and help -- the club for the sheep's enemies and the crook for the sheep's protection)
10. Prepared and full tables of food to feast on in the presence of enemies (Ps. 23:5). They feast in safety while the Shepherd watches, fights, and protects
11. Heads anointed with perfumed oil. This preceded feasts of ancient times (Ps. 104:15; Mt. 26:6-7; Mk. 14:8; Lk. 7:45-50)
12. Cups running over. Not only plenty of food, but plenty of wholesome drink
13. Confidence that such goodness and mercy will follow them to the end of life (Ps. 23:6)
14. Faith that in the next life they will dwell in God's house forever (Jn. 14:1-3; Heb. 11:10-16; 13:14; Rev. 21-22)

- George Bernard Shaw once said, "I am ready to admit after contemplating the world and human nature for sixty years that I see no way out of the world's misery but by the way which would be found by God's will." When Jesus taught the disciples to pray, He started His prayer like this: "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:9-10). It is important for God's will to be done in your life today.
- David Livingstone once said, "I had rather be in the heart of Africa in the will of God than on the throne of England out of the will of God."
- "God's will is found by three things which always concur: the inward impulse, the Word of God, and the trend of circumstances. God in the heart, impelling you forward; God in His Book, substantiating whatever He says in the heart; and God in circumstances, which are always indicative of His will. Never act until these three things agree." —DR. F B. MEYER<sup>o</sup>
- "When typhoons and monsoons occur in the Indian Ocean, these violent cyclonic storms swirl around in a circle. Before navigators learned how to cope with them, there was a frightful loss of ships and lives.
- In explaining how navigators learned to cope with them, a sea captain said, 'When we run into them we locate the center, and we go around it. We narrow the circle until we get into the center where there is a dead calm. There, we are safe.' This is a parallel of God's will. Christ speaks with finality and authority to us. When we are in the center of His will, we are safe. There He keeps our hearts and minds in perfect peace." —WALTER

### **To reiterate Mr. Shaw's statement: "The way out of this world's misery is to be in the will of God!" Oh, what a place to be.**

1. The Lord -- perfect God (Ps. 23:1)
2. My Shepherd -- perfect Keeper
3. Not want -- perfect satisfaction
4. Maketh me -- perfect Director (Ps. 23:2)
5. Lie down -- perfect rest
6. Green pastures -- perfect supply
7. Leadeth me -- perfect guidance (Ps. 23:2-3)
8. Still waters -- perfect peace

9. Restoreth -- perfect restoration (Ps. 23:3)
10. My soul -- perfect self
11. Paths of righteousness -- perfect holiness (Ps. 23:3; Heb. 12:14)
12. Name's sake -- perfect object
13. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death -- perfect trust (Ps. 23:4)
14. Fear no evil -- perfect protection
15. With me -- perfect companionship
16. Thy rod -- perfect defense
17. Thy staff -- perfect help
18. Comfort me -- perfect solace
19. Preparest -- perfect provision (Ps. 23:5)
20. Table -- perfect food
21. Before me -- perfect presence
22. In presence of enemies -- perfect safety
23. Anointest my head with oil -- perfect anointing
24. Cup runneth over -- perfect joy
25. Surely -- perfect assurance (Ps. 23:6)
26. Goodness -- perfect benevolence
27. Mercy -- perfect compassion
28. Follow all my days -- perfect life
29. Dwell -- perfect home
30. In the house of the Lord forever -- perfect destiny

### **The Lord our Shepherd...**

#### **I. HOW HE REVEALS HIMSELF TO THE SHEEP.**

- 1. As the good Shepherd Love (John 10:11) -- His death.
- 2. As the great Shepherd Power (Heb 13:20) -- His Resurrection.
- 3. As the chief Shepherd Glory (1 Peter 5:4) Second Advent.

#### **II. WHAT HE DOES FOR THE SHEEP.**

- 1. Gives His life for them and to them (Zech 13:7; Matt 26:31; John 10:11,15,28).
- 2. Seeks them out and brings them home (Ezek 34:12; Luke 15:4,5).
- 3. Gathers them and heals them (Isa 40:11; Ezek 34:4).
- 4. Guides and feeds them (Ps 23:1-3; John 10:3,4,9).
- 5. Protects and preserves them (Job 31:10; John 10:28).

#### **III. WHAT HE EXPECTS FROM THE SHEEP.**

That they should...

- 1. Hear His voice (John 10:3).
- 2. Follow His leading (John 10:4; Matt 9:9; John 21:22).
- 3. Rest under His protection (Ps 23:1,2).