**The Lord is my Shepherd**

Question: Is God your Shepherd?

**Text**: Psalms 23

1 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.

**Everything that you read in this passage of scripture says he leadeth me and thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff.  It doesn’t say anything about what we did other then follow him!!**

Isaiah 40:11 He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

Just says he. It is He **[Jesus that is doing everything and all we do is follow him.]**

Psalm 78:52 Then **he** led out his people like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock.

John 10:3 The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

10:4  When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, **and the sheep follow him** because they know his voice.

10:5 They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.

How do shepherds guide their sheep? By leading where the sheep should follow. Sheep need good leaders.

General Eisenhower used to demonstrate the art of leadership with a simple piece of string. He'd put it on a table and say: "Now, you can pull it and it'll follow wherever you wish. If you push it and it will go nowhere at all**." You've got to lead. You can't force.**

1 Peter 5:2-6   [Peter's instructions to the ministry]

Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.[ Here is my reward for doing what I do!]

5 Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

John 10:15. **"just as the Father knows me and I know the Father- - -and I lay down my life for the sheep."**

Acts 20:28-31 Paul makes this statement;

28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. [But we all know that not everyone will follow truth.]

Matthew 7:15 addresses this: **Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.**

What he is saying is “not everyone is a shepherd some are hirelings they care about what they can get out of you and not what they can do for you.”

How do shepherds guide their sheep?

1.      By leading where the sheep should follow.

2.      Sheep need good leaders.

3.      Of course Jesus is the Master Shepherd and always leads us to green pastures. You can never go wrong following Jesus

What are some of the characteristics of sheep? Listen closely and you will benefit because if we know our weaknesses we are far more prepared to deal with them.

Isaiah 53:6. **We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.**

What are sheep notoriously noted for? They go astray. They get lost easily. We get lost at the drop of a hat and we have no ability to find ourselves.

Did you ever get lost? We are helpless. Sheep are totally dependant on the Shepherd, on Jesus Christ.

You have heard how the sheep in the Highlands of Scotland are rescued when they wander off and become stranded?

The vegetation on those high places is pretty spare. And yet, down on maybe a little cliff down below on a ledge down about ten or twelve feet is a little ledge that is grassy. It hasn't been eaten because sheep don't go down there.

And some of them will smell that lush grass and they will go down on that ledge, jumping ten, twelve feet, landing on all fours like a cat and they will eat that lush grass.

Well now, there's no way they're going to get back up by themselves. Soon their bleating is heard as they try unsuccessfully to return to higher ground.

The shepherd does not rush right over to rescue them. He just lets that sheep stay down there on that ledge below.

**Note: There's no way he can relieve it until all the grass is eaten and until the sheep begins to get hungry and thirsty. There's no water there.**

 Finally the sheep gets so weak that he can't even stand up. **At that point, when he's at the bottom of the barrel,** the shepherd will come and will lower himself down over that ledge and rescue that sheep.

And he knows that if he comes any sooner that foolish sheep, of which we are sheep, will jump over the ledge to its death.

And I think often times that God waits until we are at the bottom of the barrel. I wish He wouldn't wait so long. You ought to pray that the grass will run out a little quicker.

1 Pet 2:25 makes a statement about us. This is talking about us. **For you were like sheep going astray but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.**

Story: Dr. W. B. Riley spent a vacation several years ago on a Scottish sheep herders ranch. His host met him at the Railroad station and on the long drive out to the ranch the visitor could tell the old shepherd was heavy of heart. He said, "You seem so downcast, what is wrong?" At that tears began to flow from the old man's eyes.

"Well, I lost sixty five of my best lambs last night," he said. "Wolves got in." The pastor was sympathetic and asked, "And how many sheep did they kill besides?"

The shepherd looked surprised. "Sheep? **Don't you know that a wolf will never take an old sheep so long as he can get a lamb!"**

Who is the devil seeking today? Well, all of us, but primarily today he is seeking the lambs. He goes after them like a roaring lion.

Lambs are the young in the Lord that is who Satan is after he wants our young before they get mature enough to know better then stray from the flock.

Isa 40:11 He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

Story: A famous actor was once the guest of honor at a social gathering where he received many requests to recite favorite excerpts from various literary works.

An old preacher who happened to be there asked the actor to recite the twenty-third Psalm. The actor agreed on the condition that the preacher would also recite it. The actor's recitation was beautifully intoned with great dramatic emphasis for which he received lengthy applause.

The preacher's voice was rough and broken from many years of preaching, and his voice was anything but polished. But when he finished there was not a dry eye in the room. When someone asked the actor what made the difference, he replied,

**"I know the psalm, but he knows the Shepherd." There is a difference in knowing the Bible and knowing the author of the Bible.**

What a tragedy that so many folks know Psalm 23 but do not know the Shepherd. They don't know Jesus. If you don't know Jesus as your Shepherd, you're lost. Sheep recognize the voice of their personal shepherd. Do you know Jesus?

Zechariah 13:7. **Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered...** I want to tell to you stay close to Jesus. Don't leave His side. He's our Savior. He's our Shepherd. Make sure that your sheep don't jump the fence and leave the fold.

They died in Noah’s day and in Lot’s day for th simple fact they couldn’t follow instructions no one could tell them what to do and the warning they just ignored.

Remember how Jesus said:  John 1:11-13  He came unto his own, and his own received him not .

12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Their religion kept them form receiving truth and that happens today also. People want to be their own priest;

1 Sam 13:11-12.. And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash;

12 Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.

Saul overstepped his authority by offering up a sacrifice that only the high priest could do. A lot of people overstep their authority and it cost dearly;

Listen to what it cost King Saul:  1 Sam 13:14  But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee.

Matt 4:19: Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." Without following Jesus you can't bring people into the kingdom.

John 12:26: "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor." to serve and follow Christ is the will and approval of the Father.

Luke 9:23-24: "Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.    "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.

How do these goat characteristics relate spiritually to the shepherd or leader? If a "goat" is part of a fold, you may see some of these characteristics displayed. Goats are often pushy and can cause undercurrents and dissension.

Turmoil and agitation are part of their nature. I believe this is because the goat has a dominating and controlling temperament, rather than a passive and submissive one like the sheep.

You can't lead a goat and you can’t drive him he has a mind of his own he will not follow anything you say.

Matt 25:32-34

32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats :

33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: