

Psalm 23

The Lord is my Shepherd. I shall not want.

How many times have you heard those words? If you've grown up in church like me, it's many, many times. Maybe too many times to actually allow the significance and beauty of the 23rd Psalm to penetrate your heart. But the application of this Psalm's reach is wide for a reason. It's a Psalm of remembering the goodness of the Lord to His people—the ones saved by Him. These verses provide endless amounts of comfort to warm a heart marred by suffering, grief, wandering, or persecution.

The first verse of this Psalm likens the Lord to a Shepherd, and David (or us humans) to sheep. Other Scriptures echo the same theme. 1 Peter 2:25 says, "For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls."

However, for the line "The Lord is my Shepherd" to be comforting at all- to strike our hearts—there has to be a recognition of one's absolute "sheepness". Spurgeon says, "for he cannot know that God is his Shepherd unless he feels in himself that he has the nature of a sheep." Wayward, foolish, wandering, dependent. That's us, ladies. We can be easily manipulated by the trappings of life, the cheap promises of media, the glow of filtered instagram life.

But David also says that the Lord is *his* Shepherd. God is close to us. He's personal. "He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young" (Isaiah 40:11). The point of a good Shepherd is that he knows his sheep intimately, and his sheep know him.

Because of this personal nature of our Shepherd, we, like King David, can also declare "I shall not want." This is both a truth, as God through Jesus has provided everything we could possibly need, but it is also a declaration. How many times do I find myself preaching to myself, "Maeven, you don't have to want." I don't have to be in want of someone else's life, minivan, body shape, salary, relationship, talent. I can rest. We can rest in what we have been given, even if it's a particular brand of suffering we'd rather trade for another kind.

THIS is how we are able to find the peace available to us in the next portion of David's Psalm.

He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

When we rest in Christ's sufficiency for us in the midst of whatever may be happening, a weight is lifted and we are able to actually lay down. We can be led. We can walk beside quiet waters. Literally. We can stop scrolling and flipping channels, and texting, and we can calmly stop. And lay down. And walk slowly.

Our souls can be refreshed because we have let go of demanding that life be different. "I shall not want" at a personal level, feels more like a directive to my heart than an actual feeling I experience daily. But soon, those neural pathways are created by repetition, and we can train

ourselves that in the midst of great anxiety, great suffering, or the thorny pricks of constant disappointment, we can rest in Christ. We can “not want”. We can lay down.

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. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

What’s more, God isn’t just interested in giving us peace throughout life with a lot of laying down and resting. He sets up a freaking feast for us in the midst of our enemies. He anoints us and blesses us in the presence of our adversaries! When I think of this image of walking through a valley of the shadow of death with enemies all around, the only thing I want to do is put on my invisibility cloak and scam. But it’s as though (and these are not God’s literal words) God is saying, “Sit and eat! Digest your food in peace with me! These guys can’t get to you. There is nothing, ultimately, that can destroy you. Let me bless you in front of those who want to destroy you.” Insert deep breath here.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

We are meant to dwell with God forever, feasting. But we are also meant to dwell with God now, in the midst of our enemies, our valleys of shadows, and our trials. In it all, may our hearts be able to say, “Surely goodness, surely mercy, right beside me all my days. And I will dwell in Your house forever and bless your Holy name.” (Lyrics by Shane and Shane) This is the anchor that tethers us to reality, sanity, and hope through all of life.

For a more worshipful experience or response, give [this song](#) a listen. It’s one of my favorites.

-Maeven Miller