

At Home Service: Sunday 31 October 2021 Prepared by Jack Hodge

What are some characteristics of some sheep, you think of?

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Hymn

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want.
He makes me lie in pastures green.
He leads me by the still, still waters,
His goodness restores my soul.

He guides my ways in righteousness,
And He anoints my head with oil,
And my cup, it overflows with joy,
I feast on His pure delights.

And I will trust in You alone,
And I will trust in You alone,
For Your endless mercy follows me,
Your goodness will lead me home.

And though I walk the darkest path,
I will not fear the evil one,
For You are with me, and Your rod and staff
Are the comfort I need to know.

Has there ever been a time when you went on a long and hard journey, if so, what made it worth it in the end?

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Let's pray

Praise

Write down areas to praise God for

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Forgiveness

Reflect for a minute where you have fallen short of God's Glory and standard for living

Supplication

Write down requests to God

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Hymn

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now am found
Was blind but now I see

Through many dangers, toils and snares
We have already come
T'was Grace that brought us safe thus far
And Grace will lead us home

T'was Grace that taught my heart to fear
And Grace, my fears relieved
How precious did that Grace appear
The hour I first believed

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost but now am found
Was blind but now I see

Read: Psalm 23:1-6

Sermon

Good morning, everyone, I am sure it was a bit strange to start this morning's at home service by asking you some of the characteristics about Sheep ha-ha. However, it may not come to you as a surprise but from reading today's scripture, what I want to focus on is the idea of us being God's sheep and how the Shepherd (God) makes us rest in green pastures.

However, I asked all of us at the beginning whether there has been a time in your life when you went on a tough journey, and the reason I asked this is because I myself have been on a long and tough journey. When I was 19 my home church and myself went on a trip to the Philippines, but because our church was trying to get the cheapest deal possible it meant that we had to take two 5-hour car journeys and four separate plane journeys in total taking just under 48 hours. Whilst this was an incredibly long journey what made it even more difficult for me was that during the longest flight, which was from Amsterdam to China. Suddenly, I became incredibly travel sick and without getting into too much detail..... let's just say people were not happy with me on the plane and it made the journey even more difficult. But after 48 hours of travelling and things becoming tough, I finally made it to the Philippines where I was able to rest in God's green pastures and recover from my travel sickness.

And the reason I bring this up this morning is because in Psalm 23 verses 1-6 we see how David's upbringing of a shepherd boy has shaped how he sees and experiences his relationship with God. However, the main idea I want to focus on is how the shepherd makes the sheep lay down and rest in green pastures. I don't know where you are from for those who are reading this, but for me I live in Tavistock which is right on beautiful moors with lots and lots of green grass. Often when I hear the phrase green pastures, I often think of the beautiful green grass with lots of sheep in and where the sheep are living in freedom without any issues or problems at all.

Picture of what I think



However, whilst the moors are beautiful it was not the location that David was thinking off whilst he was writing this Psalm down. Instead, theologians believe that a green pasture that David was thinking off was completely different, because simply David would have been living in a desert like area. Here is a picture of what theologians think a green pasture is in the Bible.



Rather than the sheep just purely living off the land, without having any issues or problems. Instead, it would be the shepherd's job to journey with the sheep so that the sheep could find a green pasture amongst the desert. From looking at the picture I am sure this journey would have been incredibly difficult for the sheep and the shepherd to make.

For me this completely reshapes how I view the idea of God making us rest in green pastures, because rather than thinking that we can just eat endless amounts of grass and live-in peace forever, instead it demonstrates that in life we are going to walk through the desert but ultimately God will take us to the green pastures in the end. I know in my life when things have gotten tough, God has managed to take me to a place of rest, but it has taken sometimes much longer and even sometimes it was not until the problem was overcome where I noticed that God was active and managed to be with me even though it didn't feel like it at times. So, for us today I hope that we can know that God is with us even during the tough times.

Prayers

Reflect on the pictures and say a pray of intercession for a picture which you relate to in your journey with God.



1. "Lord, save us from the desert"
is what we often pray
yet cushioned by securities
we often lose the Way.
So lead us into wilderness
and gently strip us bare;
That, trusting in your grace alone,
we find your blessings there.

2. The desert meant for Hagar
she met God face to face;
A burning bush made Moses see
the desert's sacred space.
The manna in the wilderness
led Israel to rejoice
And Elijah in the wasteland heard
the whisper of God's voice.

3. The wilderness, for Jesus,
was preparation ground
and later, wanting time to pray,
deserted space he found.
So may our journeying take us to
that place of solitude
where God's own Word, not bread alone,
becomes our daily food.

The Lord's prayer to finish

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.