

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 23

HYMN: Savior, Like a Shepherd

FROM A SHEPHERD HIMSELF

Psalm 23 is such a good Psalm, isn't it? It has so much to teach us about God's care for us. I can just imagine the day it "dawned" on David, a shepherd himself (an experienced and fine one, too!). Perhaps he was enjoying his job one day, maybe after helping one of the small lambs or bandaging up an injured ewe or rescuing a lost sheep from danger, and as a man of God, began thinking about the Lord. And all of a sudden, it became very clear to him: just as he a shepherd, loved to take good care of his sheep, so the Lord his God loved to care for him, yet so much more so! Then the parallels began to come to him- and here began the precious words we now know as Psalm 23.



Those who know and understand sheep and shepherding bring tremendous insight to what these familiar verses mean. Philip Keller, the author of A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23, is one of them. He himself was also a good shepherd for a time, one who truly knew what sheep need and provided it for them. (It also showed why some shepherds are *not* good- it takes a lot of sacrifice and lonely days to care properly for sheep!) In his book, Keller explained what "He makes me to lie down in green pastures" means, by explaining the four things it takes for sheep to lie down. This helps us to understand what God wants for us, His spiritual sheep- how He wants to care for our soul.

First, sheep lie down when they are well nourished. They stand up to eat. For us, our souls are at rest when we are well-nourished with God's Word. Second, sheep can lie down when they feel safe. Often this is when the shepherd is near. We, too, can feel safe in the Lord's presence, when we remember and put our faith in what He has told us: "I will never leave you or forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). Third, sheep lie down when they have no parasites- if you've ever seen sheep hitting their heads on things, that's why! They are tormented. A good shepherd gives his sheep an ointment on their eyes to protect them. For us, we have things that "bug" and bother us- worries and fears. The Lord wants to soothe us, relieve our souls, even prevent such a bothered state- through prayer. He tells us to "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7). Lastly, sheep lie down when they are at peace with one another. The Lord wants us, too, to live in peace- free from bickering and fighting with one another. He tells us to "bear with one another, forgiving each other...and beyond all these to put on love" (Colossians 3:13-14).

Here we have seen our God's thorough, willing and complete provision, to have souls at rest. What a wonderful God we have! Let us seek Him for nourishment, safety, peace and right relationships, continually!

Copyright © 2007 by Karen Cupit. All Rights Reserved.