Repeat: **Psalms Greatest Hits – Wk 2 – The Shepherd**

**150 songs, 400 years, 12-17 authors – Jesus’ playlist – we are going to do a shuffle through some of the best.**

**Psalms are a personal journal of emotions & perspectives.**

**This week is probably the most popular: Psalm 23 - a shepherd’s psalm. To understand the idea of shepherds, let’s think about sheep**

**Of all the animals God calls us… I wish he had called us lions or eagles**

**Sheep are not generally wild animals – they are objects of property and ownership. They must have a shepherd for their survival.**

**Sheep are considered dumb – they even follow each other off cliffs. (Not so bad for the ones on top they would land on a pillow)**

**Sheep are also known to be skittish… easily spooked – they run at anything - run a road for miles in fear regardless of the field beside**

**Sheep are not very smart when it comes to eating – they are known to walk right past their food to eat something that will kill them**

**Sheep are totally unable to care for themselves… it makes me wonder why God would call us sheep… and himself as a shepherd**

**Often, Psalm 23 is used in times of funerals and at deathbeds.**

**I have read this in hospital rooms and on gravesides.**

**Psalm 23:1 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. 3 He restores my soul; He leads 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 You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.**

**5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs 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 Forever.**

**\*\*Behind the Music – when David was running for his life**

**Written by David, a shepherd turned king who knew about valleys**

**But this is not a psalm about valleys; it’s a psalm about the shepherd!**

* + **What does that mean for us?**

**Pretty familiar Psalm – let’s step back and check out the shepherd**

**WHEN YOU FOLLOW THE SHEPHERD**

**Psalm 23:1 The LORD (One and only God of all creation and the universe YHVH – his name) is my shepherd; I shall not want. (I will not lack anything)**

**#1 Expect God’s provision**

**David was a shepherd; he knew well what it took and saw the LORD as the greatest shepherd of all time! God is the shepherd, we are sheep.**

**Jacob first called the Lord Almighty the Shepherd in Gen 49:24.**

**He is called the Shepherd dozens of times in scripture.**

**The more we understand the shepherd, the easier it is for us to trust him, because the truth is – we often follow other shepherd substitutes.**

* **We follow people – we follow culture – culture – trends**
* **We follow our own desires – BTW - they’re no wild lamb**
* **The question… Who is ultimately your shepherd?**

**When the LORD is your shepherd - What does he provide?**

**Salvation, hope, meets our needs, and always be with us.**

**“The LORD is my shepherd” – endearment – “my shepherd” – no one else. He cares for me, watches me, provides for me, and I don’t lack. I love my shepherd – he is good to me. Who is your shepherd?**

**One thing is for sure - #2 Expect some uncertainty and confusion**

**2 He makes me to lie down in green pastures… Why would he need to make me? Because sheep don’t always understand what they need.**

**Even though he is the good shepherd, there are still times when we are completely confused about what is going on.**

**What is this crazy shepherd doing? Ever felt like that?**

**Know - We won’t understand everything he’s doing – we simply can’t**

**Isaiah 55:8-9 - 8 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. 9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.**

**There are some things we can’t/won’t understand… Things I don’t get and wonder, God’s answer is - you won’t get it anyway…**

**Notice V2 - “He makes me lie down in green pastures.” Green pastures – that is what sheep want – why would a shepherd have to make them lie down there…**

**Sheep will not lie down if they are anxious about surroundings and the other sheep - but a good shepherd makes them lie down – your fine, trust me.**

**Sheep’s instinct to follow is strong (walk off a cliff, wander around, stand in line to be killed) - ever had a child tell you – but everybody is doing it … we have a tendency to follow others.**

**When God takes charge, there will be times when God will say no, do this – this is what you really need.**

**Ever flea dip a dog? The struggle the fight – try to explain – they don’t get it - the dog calms down, starts to trust you - still the burning in the eyes, skin irritation, you dry them off. “What was that about?” I tell him it was good for you – does he understand? (louder or slower…) - I just know he knows I love him**

**I’m gonna make you lie down in places that are good for you…**

**Know this - God’s “No’s” are never random**

**That wall you keep hitting – we find later was there to protect us – When he says no, he often makes us lie down in green pastures.**

**Know this - Never compromise to get around a “No” or “Not yet.”**

**When we try to get around a no or not yet (I Know better – I know what I need), the result is always disastrous.**

**You may not understand the place you are at - remember the shepherd is good – he is making you lie down – you’ll eventually see it was a green pasture.**

**When you follow the shepherd - #3 - Expect to be led gently**

**“He leads me beside quiet (still-peaceful) waters.”**

**A sheep’s wool, when it gets wet, gets heavy. Sheep can be fearful of running water; they get trapped in the water, so they stay away from running water (even if they are thirsty).**

**But the shepherd (our LORD) is kind to gently lead us to places of peace, comfort, and less chaos.**

**When you think about the shepherd, realize this –**

**\*\*God always takes into account our weaknesses & limitations**

**If you’re not ready for running water, let’s go over here – let’s drink from here**

**God takes into account our baggage – when the shepherd takes over, there are some that need more time than others to heal - family, relationships, fear, poor choices, addiction.**

**Christians have a tendency to expect others to get things right fast. The good news is the shepherd knows our weaknesses and limitations and does not expect perfection, but to follow his lead and trust Him.**

**Have a hard time reading the Bible – God understands – hard to pray - God understands - been hurt by church - God understands. This one needs some still waters, and a picture Bible… God is gracious to us… he leads us gently.**

**#4 You can expect compassion, not just correction**

**v.3 - “He restores my soul”**

**To restore is an image of bringing back a lost, wandering sheep.**

**Many have some strange views of God, possibly a result of conflicted views of a father, that God is ready to get us, because our father was angry or aggressive. We so often think God is looking for a reason to wack us, judge us, or judge others…**

**The whole reason Jesus came was to get in a relationship with us – he is not looking to kick you out, but to restore.**

**“He restores my soul” = brings me to repentance**

**John 3:17 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (he goes on to say that we are already condemned by our sin.)**

**God is in the restoration business – judgment is the final resort.**

**Ezekiel 18:23 - Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? Declares the Sovereign LORD. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live? – 32 - For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live!**

**Will God take me back? That is what the shepherd is about – do you hear the shepherd calling?**

**V 3- “He guides me in paths of righteousness, for his name’s sake.”**

**#5 - Expect to be led clearly**

**Ever get directions – go here – then there – then here… okay, got it… in reality, only to be more confused – God does not do that.**

**He not only restores but also guides you in a new direction.**

**“He guides in the path of righteousness.”**

**If you want to know the will of God, know His Word. 95% of all you need to know about God’s will is already given in it.**

**\*\* God’s will is easy to find – just obey what you already know!**

**We stress out about God’s will – this job, person, moving, purchase…**

**We keep asking God to show us what to do and what to choose.**

**Maybe you should be asking – is this something that honors or dishonors God? How does this affect my walk with God? How will this affect my kids' walk with God?**

**You can expect to be led clearly because it is always centered around His word - Don’t stress out about what you don’t know – focus on what you do know, do it, follow its guidance - and rest!**

**Some are like my life is in shambles – I don’t get it!!**

**Are you following the shepherd in righteousness?**

**Golfing lining up the ball. It feels good, but I don’t know why it keeps going in the weeds – you can see from behind – trust me.**

**We do this for “His names sake” – for his glory. He guides, and we follow in righteousness for his name to be honored. To display his grace and faithfulness as a good shepherd.**

**#6 Expect trials and valleys**

**4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death… (a place of deep darkness – a place of deep shadows – cold, dark, shadowy places)**

**Talking about green pastures, still waters, mountains, and lush pasture experiences – and then… the valley of death.**

**Picture a shepherd leading sheep through a narrow, cold valley filled with dangerous wolves and thieves, on the way to green pasture**

**“I walk through the valley of the shadow of death…” The valley is not the dwelling place or the destination for those who follow the shepherd. The Lord is also leading us through hardships.**

**Being a Christian does not mean you will never have valleys. Just read the life of the prophets, apostles, and the other disciples; they had trial after trial. Just read about persecuted Christians around the world. Talk to a former Muslim or cult member whose family shuns them.**

**Some think that living for Jesus will fix all their troubles, heal their body all the time, fill up their bank account, and fix every relationship. But that is false advertising.**

**John 16:33 “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”**

**What you have in Jesus is peace in the storm and hope for eternity. Yes, I will have dark valleys - evil will still be around me – and when I find myself in a dangerous, unknown place, I will not fear the evil around me… why? (next part)**

**4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; (Why? Because I am a ninja sheep, positive thoughts/confessions, hard work… no) For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.**

**#7 - Expect God’s faithful presence!**

**Major turning point in the Psalm: He goes from saying, “He” - talking about God, to “you” talking to God. God is now personal!**

**It is in the valley that we know the intimacy of God the clearest.**

**“Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” – Tool of the Shepherd.**

**Rod = used in guiding, correcting, and defending against wolves.**

**Staff = used to direct or rescue. (possibly the same tool)**

**We have comfort that the Shepherd is guiding us, protecting us, defending us, and even correcting us for our safety.**

**#8 - Expect blessings even in the valleys**

**Still in the valley – he writes - 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; (with enemies?? It seems like a good shepherd might wipe out the enemies or make them go away…but it does not say that… they are still there) You anoint my head with oil; (sym. of blessing) My cup runs over.**

**My cup runs over with my family and friends, it’s not money.**

**This is not about being rich, but God’s faithful daily provision and the full contentment of God’s presence.**

**Peace and joy in the midst of hardship and valleys.**

**#9 - Expect life's greatest pains and fears to be overcome - forever!**

**6 Surely goodness and mercy (love) shall follow me all the days of my life; (In this life, the shepherd brings his loving kindness and goodness with me) And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever. (He is ultimately escorting me into his very presence and home forever)**

**The greatest valley we will ever experience is death.**

**Death is terrible. If it were good, it would be in heaven. With death, sin wins – but a moment later, if Jesus is your shepherd, we wake up on the mountain top in the house of the Lord - and win.**

**(Death, where is your victory – where is your sting? – 1 Cor 15)**

**If the LORD is truly your shepherd, death has no more power.**

**Every valley here on earth may not lead to a mountain top in this life, but eventually we will - the shepherd is taking us home.**

**Jesus took the very reality of the valley of death upon his shoulders so that we might be free from the valley forever!**

**By faith in the shepherd, we will dwell in his house. Psalm 23 ends with a most powerful assurance and word - Forever.**

**Jesus is the good shepherd - John 10:11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 The hired hand (false shepherds) is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So, when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. 13 The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. 14 "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They, too, will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. / 26 …but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. 27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.**

**Do you trust the good shepherd today?**

**Where do you need the shepherd? Where do you need guidance?**

**Where do you need provision? Where do you need peace?**

* **Do you hear the Shepherd calling?**