

Fil-Am Community Church
Family Camp
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20 August 2017

THOSE WHO SEEK THE LORD LACK NO GOOD THING

Good morning! Let's look at the verse we're going to talk about this morning. "The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing."

We know that lions are ferocious animals. They are strong, aggressive, and prideful. No pun intended. What do you call a group of lions? Pride. I heard a joke about a preacher who was eaten by lions. You know why? Because he told them they must put away their pride. There are no lions here this morning, right? Maybe tigers. Besides I'm not going to talk about pride. So, I should be safe.

In this verse we read, the psalmist, the future King David talks about lions. He knew them personally. In fact, the Bible says that he encountered a lion and a bear while tending sheep and he killed both. In both instances he ascribed his triumph to God. So, King David is saying that even lions, who can scare anyone, who seem so strong and proud, are not invincible. They have a weakness, too. Like every wild animal, they can become hungry and helpless. But not the child of God. A child of God will never become weak and hungry. He or she will not lack a good thing. David experienced that. No wonder David wrote another Psalm whose theme is similar to this verse. Does anyone know what that Psalm is? Psalm 23.

This morning, I'd like to expound on Psalm 34:10 by using [Psalm 23:1](#). "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." It's like saying, "Because I seek the Lord I lack no good thing."

Now, the reason I want to talk about Psalm 23:1 this morning is because of a common temptation I observe that even Christians cannot avoid. It starts with W. it's not wine, it's not women, it's not wealth. It's "Worry".

We all worry. We know Jesus says, "Don't worry". But we still worry.

A few days ago, we heard the news of a van that plowed through a busy street in Spain killing at least 13 people and injuring many others. In this country, there's a lot of chaos in the White House and people are taking sides – Alt-Right, Alt-Left. I wish we can just do Alt-Ctrl-Delete and reset everything. And then, some say the economy is getting better but I know some folks who lost their jobs. With all these confusing things going on around us, it's hard not to worry. It may be hard, but it's possible. If, as the Psalmist says, "we seek the Lord" or we make him our Shepherd.

It's interesting that out of all the pictures that David could have chosen to describe his relationship with God he chose that of a sheep and his shepherd. Certainly that was a familiar relationship for David, who had spent much of his youth as a shepherd, caring for his family's flocks. But this Psalm is not written from the perspective of the shepherd. Instead, David imagines himself as one of the sheep and describes what it is like to be under the care of a competent, loving shepherd.

We don't know exactly when David wrote Psalm 23. It seems most likely that it was written at some later point in his life when he was being pursued by his

enemies – perhaps when Saul was searching for him to try and kill him or maybe even when His own son Absalom had taken the throne by force and led his army against David. So there was no doubt that David had a lot he could have worried about. But as he looked back over his life, he recognized that God had cared for him in the same way he had lovingly cared for his sheep earlier in his life. So he begins the Psalm with these words: “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.”

This first verse provides us with the theme of the entire Psalm and the rest of the Psalm describes various aspects of what it means to have the Lord as his shepherd. This first verse also provides us with the antidote to our worry, which we can be summarized like this: If I seek the Lord, I lack no good thing.

Before we look at the words of this first verse in detail, I need to first comment on the whole concept of sheep and shepherds. My guess is that most of you are like me – you don’t have a whole lot of personal experience that would help you to understand the nature of the relationship between the shepherd and his sheep.

One great resource I’ve used is a book by Phillip Keller titled “A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23”. As a young man, Keller spent 8 years making his livelihood as a sheep owner and rancher in east Africa so he provides some tremendous insight into the nature of the relationship between a shepherd and his sheep and I’ll be sharing some of that with you today.

The idea of God as Shepherd and us as His sheep is actually found throughout Scripture and Keller makes this comment about why that picture is so appropriate: (quote)

“It is no accident that God has chosen to call us sheep. The behavior of sheep and human beings is similar in many ways...Our mass mind (or mob instincts), our fears and timidity, our stubbornness and stupidity, our perverse habits are all parallels of profound importance.” (end of quote)

So with that picture in mind, let's look at this first verse in some detail.

Let me first draw your attention to the word “shepherd”. In the underlying Hebrew, it is actually a verb, and not a noun. The form of the Hebrew verb does cause it to operate as a “verbal noun”, so our English translations that treat it as a noun are not inappropriate or inaccurate at all, but, you know, a more literal translation would be something like this: “The Lord is the One shepherding me...”

I like that way of translating this verse because it reveals that Shepherd is more than just a title for God. The idea that God is the One who is shepherding me reveals that He is actively involved in my life. He feeds me, He provides rest and restoration for me, He protects me, He guides me and corrects me when I need it, among the other things He does in my life. God is not just my Shepherd; He is shepherding me.

Perhaps the most important word in this entire Psalm is the little two letter word “my”. To David, the Lord is not just “a shepherd” or even “the shepherd” – He is David's personal shepherd. If you want to live a life that is free from worry, then it is not enough for Jesus just to be “a shepherd” or even “the shepherd”. It's not enough if He is just your parent's shepherd or your pastor's shepherd. He must be your personal shepherd.

So in just a moment I'm going to share with you some very practical ways that you can make sure that is the case in your life.

Before I do that, however, let's spend a moment looking at the last phrase in verse 1: "I shall not want."

The verb that David uses there for "want" means "to be lacking or deficient". And without Jesus as my shepherd, my life is certain characterized by my deficiencies. And the result is that I will experience loneliness, discouragement, disappointment, failure, hopelessness, confusion and chaos.

But, on the other hand, if Jesus is my Shepherd, then He has promised me that in Him I will have everything that I need. Obviously, that does not mean that He will simply give me everything that I want. That would make Him merely a genie – a servant. What He does instead is to invite me to join Him in His purposes, plans and ways and then He provides whatever I am lacking so that I can accomplish what He desires. Or, as I put it earlier: If I seek Jesus, I lack no good thing. And if I lack no good thing, then what do I have to worry about?

Say to the person next to you, "Don't worry, Have Jesus."

So obviously the only effective, lasting antidote to my worry is to make sure that Jesus is my personal shepherd – to make sure that I can say along with the psalmist, "The Lord is my shepherd." So let's look at some practical things we can do to make sure that is true for us.

HOW TO MAKE SURE JESUS IS MY SHEPHERD

1. Know Him Personally

Now, when you read **Psalm 23** in its entirety, you won't miss the fact that several pronouns are used like "I", "me", "my", "he", "his", "you" and "your". You see, this is an intensely personal Psalm. It is not a Psalm about religion. It is a Psalm about a relationship. Religion cannot help you deal with your worry. Only a personal relationship with Jesus can do that. You can never have a relationship with God based on someone else's relationship with Him. It doesn't matter if your parents or your siblings or your friends or the people of this church or your pastor have a personal relationship with Jesus. You have to personally choose to do that yourself. When I was young, I thought it would be great to be a minister because I would be close to God and through me, my parents and sibling would be close to God, too. Later on I found out it doesn't work that way. Each one of us has to have a personal relationship with God. Each of us has to seek God.

And I'm not talking about the kind of relationship that is merely a matter of reciting the words to a prayer or even becoming a church member. I'm speaking of a relationship in which you desire to get to personally know Jesus through His Word, prayer and the operation of the Holy Spirit in your life. Listen to Jesus' own words regarding this matter: "I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me". (**John 10:14 ESV**)

Notice what Jesus says here. Those who are His sheep "know" him. And the verb "know" that Jesus uses there is a verb that means "to come to know by experience".

The idea here is that knowing Jesus personally involves more than just knowing about Him. The kind of knowledge that Jesus speaks of here only comes by living our lives day-by-day in His presence, being obedient to His Word and carrying out His purposes, plans and ways in our lives.

Can I share with you a simple test that will help you determine whether you have that kind of relationship with Jesus? The next time that you start to worry about something – your finances, your marriage, your job, your safety – where do you go first to look for solutions to those worries? If you truly have a personal relationship with Jesus – if He is your Shepherd - then the first thing you will do is take those problems to Him. In short, you seek him first.

But if your relationship with Him isn't genuine, then you may say that you're taking your problems to Jesus, but the first thing you'll do is to turn to Dave Ramsey or Suze Orman for your financial problems or Jim Dobson or Dr. Phil for your relationship problems or John Maxwell or Warren Buffet or Steven Covey for your work issues or Smith and Wesson for your safety concerns.

It's certainly possible that Jesus will lead you to utilize some of those very same resources in dealing with your worries, but the difference between having a genuine relationship with Jesus and just saying that you do will be reflected in where you turn first. If you really know Jesus, then you will trust that as your Shepherd, He knows what you need best so your first inclination will be to spend time in His Word and in prayer, seeking the solution to your problems. Our verse says, "Those who seek the Lord lack no good thing." Are we genuinely seeking Jesus?

So, the first thing I must do if I want to make sure Jesus is my Shepherd is to know Him personally. The second thing I need to do is to

2. Give Him Control of My Life

The Lord can't be your Shepherd until the Shepherd is your Lord. The two go hand in hand. You can't ask Jesus to be your Shepherd without first asking Him to be your Lord.

Making Jesus your Lord is something we talk about a lot but what does it really look like? How do I do that?

Let's think about the sheep/shepherd relationship for a moment. In that relationship the shepherd is in complete control. He makes all the decisions about what is best for the sheep. As you'll see in the rest of the Psalm, he is the one who must decide where the sheep eat and rest. He is the one who decides which paths they will take. He is the one who watches over and protects them. And when he does that well, the sheep don't worry one bit.

When facing an obstacle, the shepherd doesn't gather all the sheep together and have them vote on whether to go through that situation or go around it. He unilaterally decides what is best for the sheep.

Making Jesus my Lord means that I give up control of my life and I let Jesus call all the shots. I trust Him to determine which difficult situations that I need to go through for my own good and which ones I should bypass. I trust Him to determine

what I need in my life in order to follow His purposes, plans and ways for me and I trust Him to provide whatever is needed in order for me to do that.

Many of us claim that Jesus is our Lord because there was a point in time when we said the sinner's prayer and accepted him as our Lord and Savior. That may be true and we are saved. That makes Jesus our Savior. And we're going to heaven. But, since we're still living on earth, who is the one leading us? Is it Jesus or is it still our own selves? Is he truly Lord of our lives? As the saying goes, "Jesus is Lord of all or he is not Lord at all." So, if there's still this area of your life that you're so worried about, give it up to Jesus. Surrender the white flag to him and say, "Lord, I give up. You take control of my life."

Many of you know I've struggled with panic attacks years ago. When it comes, then I shift into worry mode big time. My worries are magnified which make me panic some more that in turn magnifies my worries some more that makes me panic some more. It's a vicious cycle. I didn't know how to get out of it. I tried religion. Tried relationships. Tried medicines. Tried Do-It-Yourself books. Tried Exercise. Tried Yoga. Tried Toastmasters. Tried drinking. And even tried taking my own life. Nothing worked. Until one morning, after running around the block several times to relax my muscles, I entered my flat, I was living in Australia at the time, sat on a chair, bowed my head, and said, "Lord, I give up. I've tried everything and nothing worked. I give you control of my life. Do whatever pleases you." That simple prayer made a difference. From that time on, Jesus directed my life. And he arranged circumstances so that I began to trust him more and worry less. Am I worry-free now? I wish I could say Yes 100%. But that's not true. Because sometimes I revert to selfie mode. I focus on me. And when that happens, Jesus reminds me gently to focus on him. He says, "Come to me, all you who are

weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” ([Matthew 11:28-30](#))

Now, let me suggest two tests that you can use to help determine whether Jesus is Lord in your life, whether He is in control.

Here is the first one. Whenever some crisis comes into your life, whenever you are faced with some fear, whenever you start to worry about something, you can do one of two things – you can either panic or you can pray.

- For example, when your checkbook balance is down to zero and you have bills coming due, you can either immediately run down to Title Max for a loan or you can pray.
- When you have some difficulties in your marriage, you can either immediately turn to a divorce lawyer or you can pray.
- When there is a presidential election in which you to choose between two undesirable candidates, you can throw up your hands in despair or you can pray.
- When you hear about a terrorist attack occurring somewhere, you can either let yourself be paralyzed by fear or you can pray.

So, if Jesus is genuinely my Lord, then prayer will be my first response, not my last resort.

Here is the second test. Do you regularly spend time in God’s Word, both on your own and with others? If you really desire to make Jesus the Lord of your life, then spending time in His Word will be your greatest joy, not a burdensome task. That’s

because the Bible is the primary instrument that Jesus uses to guide our lives. Although the Holy Spirit dwells permanently in our lives and guides us and Jesus also guides us as we spend time in prayer, as I just mentioned, the Bible remains the standard with which we must evaluate any other guidance that we believe is from Jesus since Jesus will never lead us to violate His written Word.

Psalm 119:105 says from the KJV, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” Do you rely on God’s Word when you face an issue in your life? Do you seek the Lord’s counsel when you face a difficulty? Proverbs 3:5-6 says, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”

At its foundation, all worry is a control issue. Worry is nothing more than trying to control the uncontrollable. That is why giving up control of my life and putting Jesus in charge of everything in my life is the only true antidote to worry.

Since the Lord can’t be my Shepherd until the Shepherd is my Lord that means I need to give control of my life to Jesus. Finally,

3. Be Satisfied With His Provision

David could write “I shall not want” because his confidence was not in his own abilities and resources but rather in those of the Shepherd. He understood that as the Good Shepherd, God has committed Himself to our highest welfare and that He will provide us with everything we need to experience the kind of abundant, fulfilling, joyful, worry-free life that He desires for us. And that obviously includes

far more than just our material needs. It also includes our emotional and, most importantly, our spiritual needs.

Roughly 1,000 years after David wrote those words, the apostle Paul expressed that same confidence in God's ability to supply his every need:

“And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.” ([Philippians 4:19 NIV](#))

How many of our needs will God meet according to that verse? That's right – He promises to meet all your needs. I did a word study on the word “All”. Read different versions of the Bible, read several commentaries, read the writings of Bible scholars and found out “all” means “all”. There is not one true need that you have that God won't provide for you through Jesus.

And since that is true, the implication is that I need to be completely satisfied with the Shepherd's management of my life and what He has provided for me. But if the truth be told, we don't always live like that do we? Far too often, we decide that what Jesus has provided just isn't enough and we stray far from the path that He has set before us in the pursuit of all kinds of things that the Shepherd hasn't provided because He knows that we really don't need them. And when we do eventually attain those things, how many times do we find that the reason Jesus didn't provide them in the first place is because He knew all along that wasn't what was in our best interest?

A number of years ago, there was a popular program called *The Goldbergs*. In one episode, Jake Goldberg came home for supper and excitedly told his wife, Molly, about a great idea he had. He wanted to go into business. Molly had some money

put away, anticipating just such a thing, and she gave it to him. As they sat at the dinner table, enthusiastically discussing the future, Jake said, “Molly, someday we’ll be eating off of golden plates!” Molly looked at him and replied, “Jake, darling, will it taste any better?”

Sometimes, we strive for things we don’t need. Like Mick Jagger, we say, “I can’t get no satisfaction.” But when we have Jesus, we already have satisfaction. Amen? Turn to your neighbor and say, “Jesus is my satisfaction.”

Once again, let me share you with a simple test to see if you are really satisfied with the provision that the Shepherd has already made in your life. When you pray, do you spend more time thanking God for what He has already provided or asking God for something that you want? If you recognize that every good thing you have comes from the Shepherd and you find your satisfaction in that, then your natural reaction is going to be to acknowledge that and constantly give thanks to God for supplying your every need.

On the other hand, if you are not satisfied with what the Shepherd has provided, you will view God as some genie in the sky who is there to do your bidding and you will constantly be asking Him for things that He has not provided. Or even worse, you’ll skip asking God for those things altogether and you’ll just go after them on your own. Here in America, people worship the Almighty Dollar. Our coins say, “In God we trust.” Or should that be, “In Gold we trust”? We worry about our image, so we go to stores to buy the latest whatever so we can look good before others. And then, we worry about how to pay our bills.

My point is, if we keep asking for our wants or if we keep pursuing our wants, then we are not satisfied with what God has provided.

God knows our every need and he will provide them in his own time in his own way. Amen? We just need to wait.

Lamentations 3:25 says, “The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him.”

Obviously, I am not in any way saying that we should not present our requests to God in prayer. But what I am saying is that if all we’re doing is constantly asking God for what we don’t have without first thanking Him or being grateful for what he has provided, that’s a pretty good indication that we probably aren’t very satisfied with His provision. Our verse says, “Those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.” And when I lack no good thing, then there is no need to worry about what I don’t have.

What are you worried about this morning? Are you worried about your finances, your relationships, your job, your safety, or maybe something else? Are you worried because you worry about those things? The good news for all of us this morning is that God had provided us with a 100% effective antidote to our worries. He has promised that if we make Jesus our personal Shepherd, we will have everything we need. And when we have everything we need, there is no need to worry.