

Weekly Devotional 5.6.2024

God's Promises

God Will Supply Every Need

"The Lord is my shepherd, I have all that I need.." Psalm 23

American psychologist Abraham Maslow developed and proposed the idea of a "hierarchy of needs" in a paper written in 1943. Maslow's hierarchy ranges from physiological (survival) needs like food, water, and shelter to self-actualization needs like creativity, morality, and meaning. He argued that survival needs must be met before higher needs can be satisfied, and the higher the need, the more difficult it is to meet that need because of various relational and environmental barriers. Maslow's theory was that we cannot search for purpose when struggling to find food or water. While some needs are required for human survival, others are required for human thriving. Maslow's theory identifies our needs but doesn't provide a way for these needs to be met. Scripture helps us understand that, like Maslow's two categories of needs, we have physiological and spiritual needs. The Bible also provides a way for our needs to be met and teaches us that Jesus promises us that he will provide for our needs. In John 6, we see that Jesus provides both the physical (our daily bread), and the spiritual (the bread of life). Jesus says, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty" (John 6:35).

This month, we will look at God's promises and use Psalm 23 to help ground us in these rich truths. This is a difficult Psalm, primarily because we all have specific connotations associated with it. This is one of the most beloved Psalms, often read at funerals and associated with hard seasons. Psalm 23 is also one of the most memorized passages in all of Scripture because of its words of comfort and assurance. In it, we find the Lord as our shepherd, and we are his sheep. We also see the Lord is our host, and we are his guests. The author of this Psalm was David, who, himself, was a shepherd. In the ancient world, shepherds were seen as having a low job. Generally, the youngest son would take on this role. David was the youngest of 8 sons, yet he served in this role faithfully in several ways. David was a shepherd of actual sheep and a shepherd over Israel as their king (2 Sam. 5:2). David uses the imagery in Psalm 23 to communicate God's caring nature for his people in an intimate way. Psalm 23 is a very personal Psalm where David refers to the Lord as "my" shepherd, whereas in most other Psalms, the Lord, when referred to as shepherd, was usually in the communal sense. David holds to the promise that the Lord will provide for and protect him. I believe that the Psalms are sovereignty arranged in a thematic order. Psalm 22 shows David's cry for help to the Lord under the threat of his enemies (and the words Jesus cried out on the cross). In Psalm 23, we find that David has peace that the Lord will protect him and provide for him.

The Psalm begins with the Lord being depicted as a shepherd and David as his sheep. The first verse of Psalm 23 sets the stage for the rest of the Psalm: "The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing." A Shepherd knows every need of their sheep. Sheep are helpless animals, and shepherds were sensitive to their needs, like grazing in green pastures, drinking from fresh water, and resting once secure and satisfied. The Lord was the shepherd of Israel (Gen. 48:15, Isa. 40:10-11, and Ezek. 34:30-31). Jesus is the chief shepherd and the great shepherd of his sheep (1 Pet. 5:4, John 10:11,14, and Heb. 13:20) and will be our eternal shepherd (Rev. 7:17). This is God's promise to us. Jesus can supply our every physical and spiritual need. Jesus teaches us that he is the good shepherd who laid down his life, that the sheep trust and follow the shepherd's voice, and that the sheep know the shepherd like Jesus knows the father (John 10).

This Sunday, we have the joy of celebrating Senior Sunday. This is a bittersweet milestone for students and parents alike as we look back on these formative years and look forward to where God calls these graduates. Trust in God's promise that no matter what, and in every season, Jesus will provide! Not only will he provide for our basic needs, but more importantly, he will provide for our spiritual needs where he is the good shepherd and Lord of all. We are his sheep, and in Jesus, we lack nothing.