

The Shadow of Death
Psalm 23
July 18, 2021

Death, we all will die, unless time is fulfilled and Jesus comes again, for the last time and removes this life only to extend it to the eternal life that awaits all who believe.

When you go to sleep, are you still alive? Sure you are, it is just that you are tired and to recoup, you sleep only to wake up and LIVE another day. Is that why, when death is talked of in the Bible, we are told it is sleep? Yes, these bodies wear out, die, but what about us, what about that life, our lives? Our lives, who we are, are with Jesus, in paradise, just as the guy on the cross was promised.

David in this Psalm talks of Jesus, the Shepherd. He speaks of a Shepherd for he knows that career very well, he did it, he was the one to take care of the flock. He knew exactly what those under his care needed. They needed a good place to lie down, to rest after grazing on green pastures, pastures he had led them to. Not only that, he had led them to that place in the stream where the water kind of leveled out, where it was still, fresh and yet calm. But then those sheep become people, they become him. He is that fortunate sheep that has that shepherd who has his daily bread taken care of but also does things for him like restoring his soul and leading him on paths of righteousness.

All these things, enjoyable things, great things that we all like to think of, but then, as David continues, the scene turns dark. Well, not exactly dark but there is a shadow, not death itself. It is not a mountain top but a valley. Interesting that people talk of being in a valley, when the walls are closing in, where it gets to the point where there seems to be no way out. Except what if they were to have, during that time, one who has a rod of correction and a staff of direction?

Those in a valley need to correct something in their lives, There was a path they were on that got them there and now they on their own it seems and have that shadow of death coming after them to remove this life from them. But not David, no, even though that evil shadow is there, wanting to take this life from him, he has the Shepherd with His rod of correction and His staff of guidance who takes him through, what a great comfort that is to him.

David is in the presence of enemies as he goes about life, a great life prepared by the Shepherd for him. The thing of it is, that great life had some valleys. Valleys where there was that shadow, that shadow of death that, for a moment, caused him to

fear. Oh, it was only a shadow for a time, a time when he would call out to the Lord, to the Shepherd. The Shepherd was one step ahead. He had something good planned for David. He would anoint him with oil, reminding us of Mary who took that alabaster jar of oil and anointed the Shepherd, her Shepherd.

David talks of that valley. Jesus took a walk through that valley that week that led Him to the cross. It took Him to that upper room where the cup overflowed to all with His very body and blood for them and for all. It was His following through with the plan of His coming into the dark world of sin to take it head on. It is then we see Him on the cross taking sin on with His very life, that perfect life demanded by God as payment for the world's sin.

David knew the Shepherd was his shepherd. He knew that his Shepherd was doing what a good shepherd would do and even more. He knew that he was going experience goodness and mercy all the days of his life. Where was he going to habit that he would experience these things? It was in the house of the Lord, where he would dwell and there to continue to have his needs taken care of.

We finish this Psalm on a high, not in the valley and yet we are talking of David and us who have that Shepherd who is with us through the times on the top of the mountains as well as through the valley of the shadow of death that we go through. We know that Jesus will watch over us as we have those times in the valley that may at first bring about that tinge of fear but then quickly changes, focusing our eyes forward, ahead to where He is leading us out of the darkness and to the table, prepared by Him to live. We live, even though we live among those who are evil and really don't care about us but only their evil agenda.

We may be on a high but what about those who live in this life but don't have the Shepherd leading them n paths of righteousness because they chose not to be led but want to strike out on their own, trusting in themselves and their so called goodness to pull them through that valley. Without the Shepherd, they are lost and will not enjoy what we enjoy when the last breath of this life is taken.

Like I said at the beginning of this sermon, we are all going to die. You, me, the person sitting next to you in the pew, all those we know, the whole world. Many are going to die outside of the Shepherd's care for them. Outside of His care they will experience something quite different than we will.

We know that there are two outcomes to this life. One is with the Shepherd forever and the other we don't like to think about that much even though there are so many, many whom we know, who will find themselves on the other side of the road.

A few days ago Sean Hannity interviewed a pastor who said that the Lord put him in a vision where he found himself in hell. I thought it was something we all need to think about when we go about our days with the Shepherd leading us on paths of righteousness, even that path that takes us through the valley of the shadow of death.

(SHOW VIDEO: July 13th Sean Hannity show on Fox "Minister experiences 'out-of-body' trip to Hell before returning to life")

I don't know if you ever thought of what hell would be like. Yes we do have a glimpse of what it will be like when we remember the rich guy who asked for a drop of water and his wanting to have Lazarus tell his family of Jesus. We know that hell will be a separation from anything good but those there will still have their lives even though as Jesus said that for some it would be better for them that they had never have been born.

What did you think of the video? Was it a little frightening? How would you like to walk a mile in those shoes? The pastor said it was 23 minutes. What about eternity?

I don't know if what he says is true or not. It really doesn't make a whole lot of difference other than we should think about such things as we were placed here for one reason and one reason only, to tell those who are not following the Shepherd that there is life after this life. There is the eternal life lived with the Shepherd where there will no longer be pain, sorrow, thirst, hunger and all things that came about because satan deceived our first parents and has continued to do even today. So, if that could be and we trust it is, then what about hell, separated from all that is good, especially the Shepherd that you rejected?

Might your tone of voice be changed as you relate to others what they are being lied to about? It is a lie that this is all there is. It is a lie that they will be keeping company with all their friends. It is a lie that there will be anything good and who knows how bad it will truly be?

The shadow of death. It is a dark shadow that awaits those who are not led by Jesus. We know the Shepherd and we have the opportunity warn others of what awaits all who reject His plan of salvation that can only come through Him. Goodness and mercy are ours but what awaits those who reject Him is the opposite. What would it mean to them to know what they are going to miss and have to endure?