

Greg Laurie: Don't Forget About These Overlooked Psalms

One of the most well-known passages in the Bible is Psalm 23. It has been justly called the pearl of the Psalms. Throughout the centuries, so many have benefited from its profound yet simple truths.

But it's also important to note the psalms that precede and follow Psalm 23.

Psalm 22, for example, presents Jesus as the suffering Savior. This psalm gives us a graphic account of His Crucifixion, including references to the way He would die and the piercing of His hands and feet. Also, it opens with the words Christ uttered from the cross: "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?" (v.1).

Then Psalm 24 speaks of Christ's return, when He will come again in glory. Instead of wearing a crown of thorns, He will wear a crown of glory as He comes to establish His kingdom on earth.

So, we have Jesus presented as the suffering Savior in Psalm 22, as the good Shepherd in Psalm 23 and as the returning King in Psalm 24.

In fact, the pages of Scriptures give us many pictures of God. And in Luke 12:32, Jesus makes a statement that pulls a number of them together: "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

In that statement, Jesus presents God as a good Shepherd, a Father and a King. We have a Shepherd in the words, "Do not be afraid, little flock." Then we have a Father and a King in the following: "For it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Of course, each of these pictures has its limitations individually. But taken together, they give us a more complete picture of who God is.

He is our King, our sovereign and our master. Therefore, we walk before Him in reverence, awe and respect.

But at the same time, He is our Father who loves us. So we have a relationship with Him in which we have open access into His presence.

In addition, He's our Shepherd, because we're often just like sheep: dim-witted, straying and getting ourselves into messes of our own making. So He is there to rescue His flock.

David, who penned Psalm 23, was a shepherd. He was a shepherd's son as well. Also, the Bible refers to him as the shepherd king of Israel.

I can just imagine David sitting on a rock one day, looking out at his sheep, when the words of Psalm 23 came to him. Maybe he was reflecting on the things about sheep that reminded him of himself.

Of course, there's a lot we can say about sheep. They have many strange characteristics, including the fact that they really can't take care of themselves.

Some animals, for instance, can pretty much care for themselves. A dog requires some care. Then there are cats. They stop in for food and leave for the rest of the day. Sometimes they even disappear for days at a time.

Sheep, on the other hand, need constant attention. God didn't design them with long claws, sharp teeth or great size and strength. They completely depend on their shepherd for sustenance, protection, guidance and pretty much everything.

And while sheep are basically alike in their essential nature, each sheep also has its own distinct characteristics. Thus, a

shepherd comes to know the unique traits of each sheep in his flock.

For instance, he might know that one of his sheep is afraid of high places. Another sheep might be afraid of dark shadows. So, the shepherd would keep that in mind while he was leading his flock.

Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. I know My sheep and am known by My own" (John 10:14).

So not only does the good Shepherd know our natures, but He also knows our needs. And when God looks at us, He knows the deepest needs of our lives.

What, then, is the desire of the shepherd for his sheep? We find the answer in this statement from Christ: "The thief does not come, except to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

The shepherd wants his flock to flourish. He wants his sheep to be well-fed and cared for. He wants them to be content.

So, when Jesus said, "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," he was saying that God isn't austere, angry and reluctant to work in our lives. Rather, God loves us and has a tender heart toward us. It gives Him pleasure to give us His kingdom and blessing.

This abundant life Jesus spoke of is not necessarily a long one. But it certainly is a full one. Though medical science has had breakthroughs that possibly could extend the years of our lives, they certainly can't add life to our years.

For me, just thinking of Jesus as my good Shepherd gives me a great sense of security.

Yet, it's important to note that only the Christian can say,

"The Lord is my Shepherd." That statement is only true for someone who has committed their life to Christ.

Is Jesus Christ is living in your life? Is He your Shepherd who leads and guides you? If not, then I hope you will make a commitment to him today. {eo}

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