

Psalm 23

L-13: The House of the Lord Forever

A. Outline of lesson:

1. The unbeliever sheep
2. The African shepherd
3. The Good Shepherd buys all the sheep on the cross, Jn 10:11
4. The Good Shepherd rises from the dead, Jn 10:17
5. Believing is going through the Door, Jn 10:9
6. The Shepherd does not let go, Jn 10:27-28
7. Eternal Security, Ps 23:6b

B. Bible verse: [Psalm 23:6a](#) “Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life ...”

The ‘memory requirement’ for a sticker this week is: “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. Even 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. You have prepared a table before me, in the presence of my enemies You have anointed my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life”

C. Review:

1. Need for a shepherd? Becoming His sheep
2. Contentment, LG, the desires of your heart.
3. Lie down and rest = no fear, no infestation, no fighting, no hunger.
4. Grass and water together – BD + HS
5. Restoring a cast sheep
6. The spiritual life is called ‘paths of righteousness’
7. Death-shadowed valley – soul and spirit go to heaven
8. Confidence removes fear
9. The rod represents authority, discipline, examination, protection. The staff represents fellowship, guidance, forgiveness
10. Doctrine – our prepared table
11. Holy Spirit’s oil – defense against temptation, promotion. Cup – capacity for blessing
12. Grace pursues

D. The Lesson:

There are sheep who do not belong to the Good Shepherd. They are standing at the edge of their brown and dry pastureland gazing through the fence as He brings His flock down from the mountains and home for the winter. Their tummies are gnawing with hunger. Their tongues are pasty dry from thirst. One stumbles, his scrawny legs too weak to hold his body. They are

To the teacher:

Present the gospel and information about salvation as often as the Holy Spirit prompts you. Those who have never believed will have the opportunity and those who have will learn a little bit more about their so great salvation.

Begin every lesson with confession – the naming of sins to God. This insures the filling of the Holy Spirit for the teaching of God’s Word. It may be necessary to repeat this process throughout the lesson so learning will be maximized.

These lessons are consecutive and build on the previous lessons. It will be helpful for you to look over the previous lesson, so you can see their continuity.

One of our objectives is to have the children memorize the entire Psalm, which has only 6 verses. To help encourage this we have a “Psalm 23 chart” with each phrase and a place for a ‘lambie sticker’ when each part is memorized. With each consecutive week, the child needs to say everything so far and the newest part learned in the previous lesson. Then, a sticker can be put in the corresponding box.

Doctrinal materials for this series were taken from R.B. Thieme’s study of the 23rd Psalm (Spiritual Dynamics 232-251) and [A Shepherd Looks as Psalm 23](#) by Phillip Keller

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watching as the Good Shepherd of the luscious green pastures stands at the doorway to His fields. He is counting His sheep, calling each one by name, caressing each face as they enter into His sheepfold. Winter is approaching and they are home.

There is a story just like this about a shepherd in Africa. As he brought his sheep home for the winter, the sheep of the neighboring pasture stood at the fence, longing for his luscious green meadows. Their owner did not care for them. He did not take them on a lovely summer trip into the high country. They spent the hot summer right where they were. Their shepherd did not provide cool still waters from a pool on the bank of a stream. They drank whatever water they could find. By the end of summer all the water in their pasture was contaminated by the sheep. Not only was the grass dry and brown, since the sheep had not been moved from one pasture to another, they had pulled up the roots; all that was left was dry dirt. Many dead sheep lay exposed in the open, their flesh picked over by the vultures, for their shepherd did not care or come looking for them when they became cast. Very few lambs or yearlings were left. The predators came in at night and easily stole them away, for they had no protection. The irritating flies were gone by this time, but because no one cared enough to smear the oil-sulphur mixture on their heads and noses, the larvae were now living inside their heads, eating the flesh of their brains. They were bruised, injured, and starving. One time, since these two pastures, that of the caring owner and that of the heartless owner, were along the seashore, three sickly ewes stole a way into the green pastures on the other side of the fence. In winter, the tides are very low. One day, they simply ventured far into the wet sands and around the end of the fence. They gorged themselves on the thick green grasses. Sadly, they became very ill with horrible stomach aches. It was like feeding fattening desserts to a person with the flu. They could not digest the rich grass; it nearly killed them. The shepherd had to get his wheelbarrow and haul the three very sick sheep back to their owner. When the heartless owner saw them, he cared not at all – and so to not be bothered with them, he slit their throats. The shepherd of the good pastures could do nothing for them, for they were not his sheep – they did not belong to him. Had they been his, he would have put them on a very special and restricted diet, giving them small amounts of brown grass, adding a little bit of nourishing grain and fresh green grass each day. He would have placed before them a trough of fresh water, a little at a time. He would have taken them to the vat and completely dipped them in the oil to rid them of their parasites. He would have given them the medicine that kills the insects in their heads. Gently, each day he would rub their bodies, cleaning their wool, letting them feel his touch as he slowly restored them to health. But, they were not his. And so, this good sheep owner had no choice. He returned these three ewes to die by the hand of their evil owner. They would have died anyway, starving during the cold winter.

God tells us that this is just like our story, with a few differences. We were all born belonging to the bad shepherd, and the pasture of this world is just as barren as the one in the story from Africa. The ruler of this world cares nothing for us, the human-sheep of his kingdom. He feeds us lies – brown grass and dirty water – telling us that this is good, the ‘truth’, when it is not. He does not care when the tormenting flies come. “Let them crawl up their nostrils and bore into their thinking.” He has no concern for our well-being or safety. There is no protection from the wild animals that attack, devouring the little lambs. Because we are sheep, there is nothing we can do. We are hopeless. We are helpless. We are doomed. But God loves this world of sheep so much that He sent His Shepherd to rescue us, the hopelessly sick and lost sheep, so we would not die of disease and starvation, but have life forever in His green pastures. How could He do this?

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The evil bad shepherd will not simply give away his sheep. “I will buy them!” says the Good Shepherd, “They will then belong to Me. I will love them and take care of them.” Oh, but the price was huge. It would cost everything He had. In fact, the purchase price for the lost and dying sheep was the very life of the Good Shepherd. “I will pay that price! I will give My life as payment for the sheep!” This is the difference between God’s story and that of the African shepherd. Jesus Christ, our Good Shepherd, BOUGHT us – the African shepherd did not buy the three ewes that snuck into his pasture.

*“I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.”
John 10:11*

On the cross, the Good Shepherd gave His spiritual life as payment for us, the lost sheep of the world. The real debt was sin. The real payment was the judgment of spiritual death. On the cross, God the Father put all our sins on Jesus and made Him guilty instead of us. We are the sinful sheep; He is the innocent and pure shepherd. God took the sins off us and put them on Him. Then God condemned Him in place of us. Our Good Shepherd died spiritually paying for our sins – so we could be purchased and freed from the horrible dry and death-filled pasture of Satan’s kingdom, the world. What a wonderful thing our loving Shepherd has done for us. But, oh how sad it would be if the sheep were purchased and freed but the Shepherd stayed dead. The good news is – our Shepherd did not remain dead! At the very moment when the last sin was paid and the final sheep of the entire human race was purchased our Shepherd yelled out, “It is finished!” and we were freed from the pasture of sin. Our Good Shepherd then died again, a second time. This time His body died physically. He was wrapped in grave clothes and buried in a stone tomb. Now, listen closely, for this is the best news of all. Three days later, He rose from the dead! This means that He is alive again and will never die again, forever and ever! We, the human-sheep of the world, have been bought and freed – and our Shepherd LIVES to care for us, to protect and provide for us, and especially to love us each and every day!

“For this reason the Father loves Me [the Good Shepherd], because I lay down My life so that I may take it again [rise from the dead].” John 10:17

*Now, when our Good Shepherd stands at the door of the sheepfold, He can let all the sheep in, for He has purchased each and every one; they belong to Him. He is their new owner. However, each sheep has one little thing to do – he must **want to be owned** by Jesus, the Good Shepherd. Do you remember the three ewes who tried to sneak into the good pastures? They did not go through the door. They went down into the surf and around the fence. They tried to find their own way in. It didn’t work for them and it doesn’t work for us. You can’t get into the Good Shepherd’s flock by your own planning and efforts. You can’t go around the fence; you must come through the door. When a human-sheep tries to get into heaven by ‘going around the fence’ it means that he is trying to be good enough to please God and earn his way to heaven. Being a ‘really nice person’ is sneaking around the fence. Being ‘religious’ or ‘giving lots of money to the poor’ is breaking through the fence. Doing anything to ‘please God’ and ‘pay for your own sins’ is the wrong way in. The only thing that pleases God is what Jesus did on the cross. Your sins have already been paid when He took them and died in your place. So, how do we get into the Good Shepherd’s pasture? We must want to go through the doorway. This is what ‘believing in Jesus’ means. During olden times, when David wrote this psalm, the ‘fence’ of the*

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sheepfold was a stone wall, high enough to keep out the coyotes and cougars. But, the 'doorway' was made of wood, just like the wood of the cross. Walking through the door of the sheepfold is going through the cross – it is believing that Jesus paid for your sins and bought you – to be one of His sheep. This is how a sheep gets in – he believes in the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

“I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.” John 10:9

“The Lord is my Shepherd ... and I will dwell in the home pastures of the Lord forever.” Once a sheep is through The Door he is forever one of the Shepherd's sheep. No matter what he does – he is one of the Shepherd's sheep. If, during the next summer's mountain journey, he wanders off the path – he is one of the Shepherd's sheep. If, during the winter, he tries to go around the fence and get back into the pastures of sin – he is one of the Shepherd's sheep. If he becomes cast – he is still one of the Shepherd's sheep. It is absolutely impossible for this sheep to not be one of the Shepherd's sheep. His Shepherd will pursue him with grace, every time. He will come after him and overtake him – and restore him. This sheep may be obedient and feel the Shepherd's affectionate touch, or he may be disobedient and feel the Shepherd's rod – but either way, he is still the Shepherd's very own sheep. The Shepherd has bought this sheep with His very own life – He will not let go!

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.” John 10:27-28

At the moment we believe in what Jesus Christ did on the cross He gives us an eternal present. It is 'eternal life'. We are 'born again' into His pastures. We have a brand new life as one of His sheep. It is a very new and special kind of life – one that never ends. This gift of eternal life carries with it a promise from the Good and Faithful Shepherd – “I will keep you forever! No matter what you do, you are My sheep!” This is His absolute promise of safety from danger, from the evil predators of this world. This is His guarantee of green grass and clear waters all the days of our lives. This is His gift of an eternal home pasture forever and ever. When the day comes that He closes our eyes in the death-shadowed valley, we know, because He has promised, that He will open our eyes in heaven. We will gaze into the face of our Shepherd forever and ever. “I will dwell in the house of the Lord for all eternity” means we are safe forever. We are secure forever. We are blessed forever. But, best of all – we are His forever!

“and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” Psalm 23:6b

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Craft: Make a sheepfold of small pop sickle sticks with a door

Coloring Picture: Sheep kisses Shepherd

Take-home pamphlet:

This little pamphlet is a short version of this lesson, a picture to color, a puzzle to do, and a question and answer section at the end. It is designed to be given to the children at the end of class. However, if you need to fill time, you can give it out early. A child can read the story and all the children can work together to answer the questions on the back.

Psalm 23: literal translation from the original Hebrew

A song of David

The Lord is the One shepherding me

I cannot and do not lack for anything.

He causes me to lie down in pastures of choice grass

He leads me to waters of refreshment

He restores my soul

He guides me in paths of righteousness because of His Person

Also [in addition] when I walk through a death-shadowed valley

*I cannot [do not] fear evil [disaster, distress, harm, whatever is your manner of death]
because You – with me!*

Your rod [discipline], Your staff [deliverance], then comfort me.

You have prepared a table in front of me for my benefit in the sight [presence] of my enemies

*No doubt about it, both good [prosperity, benefit, happiness] and grace shall pursue me all
the days of my life*

And I will dwell [in a state of perfect blessing] in the house of the Lord forever.