

Home Group Notes 1

Psalm 23

God's leadership

****Context**

Psalm 23 is one of the most popular psalms in recent generations. It has inspired at least two favourite hymns. There is a danger of thinking we know it and therefore missing some of what God says in this part of his Word. The best way to hear the Lord well is to start with *context* then *text* then *application*:

1. The obvious context for Psalm 23 is there at the start. What do you know about David? **Read 1 Samuel 17:34-35** How did David understand the role of the shepherd?
2. The other straightforward context for Psalm 23 is Psalm 22. **Read Psalm 22 then Psalm 23.** Did you realise that the Psalms were often read in groups of two or three or more consecutively?
3. We know that the Bible is one message so we expect Psalms to make more sense in the light of the New Testament and Jesus' work. How does Jesus' death on a cross and resurrection from death help us better grasp Psalm 22 and Psalm 23 (particularly verses 4 and 6)?
4. ****Text and application**
Read Psalm 23 again Saying 'the Lord is my shepherd' is rare in the praises of Israel. The Lord is my rock is more common. What are the aspects of a shepherd's leadership that make this picture so appropriate for describing the Lord?
5. What do verses 2 & 3 mean for us today in practical terms?
6. What makes the psalmist so confident when close to death(4)?
7. What do you fear? What does the psalmist not fear?
8. Why don't we need to fear death? NB context = Psalm 22
9. How does the psalmist's way of addressing the Lord change from v3 to v4f?
10. Addressing God in both ways is good and right. Vv.1-3 is praise and prayer, and so is v.4,5. Do you describe God as 'he' in your prayers and praises? Do you address God as 'you' in your prayers and praises? Which do you say more and why?
11. What brings you comfort and why? What brought the psalmist comfort? Why was that?
12. The picture of the Lord as a shepherd has been overtaken by the picture of the Lord as companion. Do you see God as such?
13. In vv.5-6 the picture of the Lord changes again to that of host. What are the past and future aspects of God as host which David points to?
14. Vv.5-6 may be a recollection of 2 Samuel 17:24-29. David and the Son of David were used to eating with enemies close. Is it a picture which inspires you?
15. If the pursuit of David by Absalom is behind v5, it heightens the description of the even stronger pursuit of David by the Lord's goodness and mercy in v6. Alec Motyer translates it 'good and committed love will pursue me all the days of my life'. Have you felt pursued by the love and mercy of the Lord?
16. The Hebrew phrase at the end of v.6 means 'length of days' i.e. not the short season of days of life on this earth but the endlessly prolonged days of life in the Lord's house. Where in the New Testament does Jesus describe heaven as the house of the Lord? **Read it together**
17. What is your favourite psalm? Tell us why next week

Prayer Points

Pray for yourself, that you will grow in your praises and praying this term
Pray for our Lent focus on the psalms, that all in our church may grow in spiritual depth and boldness, and be ready to speak or sing out the praises of God
Pray for the work of the Wellspring, Foodbanks, the furniture station(closing), and others in our locality serving homeless & hardpressed people this Winter
Pray for our children and youth groups and activities, that they may start the new school term well, and that the Lord would raise up leaders and helpers to serve the Lord and see further growth