



One Page Sermon

By Pastor Robb McCoy

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Love is my shepherd

Recap of Sermon from 6/4/23 by Robb McCoy
Scripture: Psalm 23

Psalm 23 might be the most recognizable passage of the entire Bible. It is an ancient poem that has been read and memorized by millions. The words “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want” immediately triggers images of pastures, still water, and the valley of the shadow of death. The image I selected for this sermon series came up when I searched “light over dark valley.” Today we begin our look at this Psalm. Over the next five weeks we will focus in on each of the six verses of the poem.

“The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.” is the more modern (and accurate) translation of the opening verse, and an honest reflection presents a tension that feels unresolved. Declaring “I lack nothing,” or even the more traditional “I shall not want,” feels unrealistic. There are plenty of things I lack. I can easily make a long list of things that I want, and not all of them are superfluous material things. Yet God the shepherd is not a magical wish-granter. Every parent knows instinctively that they cannot simply give their children everything they want.

I believe the life of David—the one to whom this poem is dedicated—illustrates this well. David was a shepherd boy, last of his family to be considered worthy of being a king. When the prophet Samuel came to Jesse’s house to find the messiah, they didn’t even bring David out to meet him. David was still out in the fields watching over the sheep. Yet he was the one called by God to be anointed and “to shepherd my people, Israel.”

When David was the shepherd, he defended his flock. He was brave. He stood up to the one who mocked God (Goliath). He led his people to a new city (Jerusalem) and



brought along with him the tabernacle of God, praising God the whole route.

Later in life, he lived out the first verse of this poem. He was king. He had palaces, children, riches, and power. He truly lacked for nothing. Yet it was in this moment that he wanted more. His want for more led to rape and murder, and his life was thrown into upheaval ever after. It is too common in human history that those who have everything they want then simply want more. Greed and consumption are the destruction of many.

The want that is described in Psalm 23 is not a want of every urge satisfied, it is feeling content with what is present. If we let the Lord be our shepherd, then we can live in a state of thanks and praise. We can find rest in God’s presence. It is said in Scripture and by many followers of Christ that “God is love.”

What if we read this Psalm like this: “Love is my shepherd, I shall not want.” Love is our guide. Love leads us beside still waters. Love protects us through the dark valley. Love fills our cup. If Love is our shepherd, then we will have all the grace, forgiveness, mercy, and compassion that we need. If love is our shepherd we will be led to right relationships, companionship, and friends. There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for friends. With Love as our Shepherd, we will want for nothing.