

To Be Like Children

Scripture Reading: Matthew 21:-1-16

We call it “Palm Sunday” because Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem was received by common folk with much joy. Along with their outer garments, they threw down palm branches and cried out “*Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!*” The word “Hosanna” means “Save Now.” People were yearning for some great deliverance for their nation. They wanted some great renewal to happen so that “the good old days,” that they had always heard about, would be restored. Jesus went into the temple, corrected the errors of the moneychangers, then healed people. It looked like a revival had started... but wait a minute... the chief priests and scribes don’t approve. They are arguing with Jesus. They want Jesus to stop the commotion. But Jesus quotes a psalm and talks about how much God loves the praise of children.

More than once, Jesus held up the example of children before the adult audience. Adults get complicated and dangerous. Jesus wants us to unlearn some of the things that life has taught us and become simpler.

In Matthew 18, the disciples asked Jesus who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus called a small child to join them and answered, “... *Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*” (Matthew 18:3-4)

In Matthew 19, when the disciples complained that people were bringing infants to Jesus so that he would bless them, Jesus said, “*Let the children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.*” (Matthew 19:14)

Paul instructed us, “*Therefore be imitators / followers of God as dear children. And walk in love...*” (Ephesians 5:1-2a) Paul also counsels that we use discernment when we try to be like children. In I Corinthians 14:20, Paul says, “*Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature / men.*”

At Northland Bible Church we have celebrated the idea of God’s love for children and His use for children in our lives, by having our Kid’s Klub concert on Palm Sundays. Let’s sing a song and proceed with their program.

Special Note:

The concert could not be recorded, but we have included the notes for the message about Psalm 23 which was interwoven with the children's singing and quotation of the Psalm.

Psalm 23 – The Lord: My Shepherd

¹The LORD *is* my shepherd; I shall not want.

²He makes me to lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside the still waters.

³He restores my soul;
He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

⁴Yea, 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.

⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over.

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life;
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Introduction: We love to talk about Jesus. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. Nearly 2000 years ago, **The Good Shepherd** gave his life for the sheep by dying on the cross and paying the price for our sins. But He was not going to stay in the grave. He would rise from the dead, give us instructions on what to do until He came again to gather His sheep to be with Him forever. In the meantime, **Christ, our Great Shepherd** is living in the hearts of believers to guide us and protect us.

The 23rd Psalm was written by a shepherd and every aspect of the psalm relates to how a shepherd cares for his sheep. Psalm 23 is written from a **“sheep’s-eye view”** of their Shepherd. It is our desire to share this Psalm with you so that you can love, trust, and follow Jesus Christ as your personal shepherd.

Psalm 23:1 – “The LORD *is* my shepherd; I shall not want.”

With Christ as our personal shepherd, we can be sure that He has thought of our every need and is prepared to be our all-in-all. “I shall be fed and cared for.” “I shall be guided and protected.” “I shall not be forgotten.” I shall be content with my shepherd.” “Jesus Christ is enough for me.”

Jesus said, **“My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.”** (John 10:27-28) Let us remember that we should follow Christ, as good sheep follow our shepherd.

Psalm 23:2-3

² He makes me to lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside the still waters.

³ He restores my soul;
He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake

Sheep need to lie down after eating. Why?

They have 2 stomachs. They must ruminate (chew their cud). They need peace & quiet. They just can’t “eat and run.”

Sheep can’t lie down & rest unless:

- Not afraid of predators / enemies
- No friction with other sheep
- No flies / pests bothering them
- No worries about hunger

Jesus like a shepherd can take care of every problem in our life, so that we can have joy & peace in a world full of problems. Through Christ, we can be free from worry & fear.

Sheep need clean fresh water, where they can safely drink (still water). Jesus wants us to be filled with His Word, which is like water that refreshes our minds and hearts.

Our Psalm tells us that “*He restores our souls.*” This is talking about “cast sheep.” Sometimes sheep fall over and end up on their backs, unable to get up. The shepherd watches for this and gently gets them back on their feet.

Jesus also watches for us when we fail or get ourselves into a mess that we can’t fix. He gets us back on our feet when we fall. He puts us on the paths of righteousness, so that we don’t keep falling over and over.

Psalm 23:4-6

⁴ Yea, 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.

⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over.

⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life;
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

In the **Spring**, the sheep graze in the lower pastures, near the ranch. But in the **Summer**, they head to the **higher pastures in the mountains**. To get there the sheep must travel through dangerous ravines / valleys, but the shepherd finds safe paths & protects them.

Jesus has things for us to learn & do. In leading us to “**higher ground**” we too will face dangers & difficulties. Jesus will guide & protect us. He will never forsake us.

When our Psalm says that **“He prepares a table before us,”** this is referring to a big flat area of land (called “table land” – Spanish “mesa”). The sheep can stay in the middle, grazing safely, while predators are kept at a distance. **The world is full of dangers, but Jesus will keep us / preserve us.**

The oil the shepherd uses on the heads of the sheep is a special mixture that is used like ointment – to heal and to comfort the sheep from the irritations of flies and parasites. The ointment also serves as a repellent to keep pests away. **It is not always the big problems that take us down. Sometimes it’s the many little things that overwhelm us. Jesus understands and will help us with any problem.** See I Peter 5:7.

When it turns **Fall** and it is getting colder, it is time to come down from the mountains and return to the ranch / lower pastures. Frost and early snows can make the sheep cold and numb. **The shepherd has mixed wine and water** together, so that it can be put in a cup for the sheep to drink and get a warm boost, so that they can keep moving. **Over and over, Christ will warm us and motivate us through the promises of His word, assuring us of His love. He will never leave nor forsake us.**

When the sheep arrive home at the ranch, they have a relationship with the shepherd that is stronger and closer than ever. They love Him and trust Him and will follow Him wherever He leads.

- Is Jesus Christ your personal Lord and Savior?
- Do you trust Him / follow Him?
- Do you feed on His Word?
- Can you say, with the Apostle Paul –

“...the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

(II Timothy 4:18)

Note: Much of the technical information about the shepherd and his care of the sheep was obtained from the excellent book by Phillip Keller, “A Shepherd looks at Psalm 23” (Zondervan).

This book is available free at Northland Bible Church.