

International Conversation Cafe

Old Testament: Psalm 23, the Good Shepherd

The Psalms are a collection of Hebrew poetry that was completed by the 3rd century BC. It is divided into 5 sections and used as a book of prayer and praise. King David wrote many of the Psalms. Some of them describe a current event or experience of the Psalmist and a future event. We call these Psalms, prophetic. For example, Psalm 22 describes the suffering of Jesus Christ on the cross. Psalm 23 describes how the Shepherd (Jesus) takes care of those who follow him. Psalm 24 describes the honor Jesus will receive as king. Psalm 23 is one of the best loved Psalms.

Psalm 23 A psalm of David.

¹ The Lord is my shepherd. He gives me everything I need.

² He lets me lie down in fields of green grass.
He leads me beside quiet waters.

³ He gives me new strength.
He guides me in the right paths
for the honor of his name.

Explain the metaphor of the shepherd and the sheep. Whom does each represent?

What kinds of things does the shepherd do for the sheep?

What kinds of things does Jesus do for those who follow him?

⁴ Even though I walk
through the darkest valley,
I will not be afraid.
You are with me.
Your shepherd's rod and staff
comfort me.

What do you think is the darkest valley could be?

Why is it that those who follow Jesus do not need to be afraid of evil?



Christ, the Good Shepherd. Catacomb

Now the imagery changes from a shepherd to a great host holding a feast in honor of an invited guest. David saw himself as the guest.

⁵ You prepare a feast for me
right in front of my enemies.

You pour oil on my head.

My cup runs over.

⁶ I am sure that your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life.

And I will live in the house of the Lord
forever.

In the ancient Near East agreements were celebrated with a large meal. Oil on a person's head indicated honor.

NIV Study Bible

How do you feel about being the honored guest at a feast hosted by God?

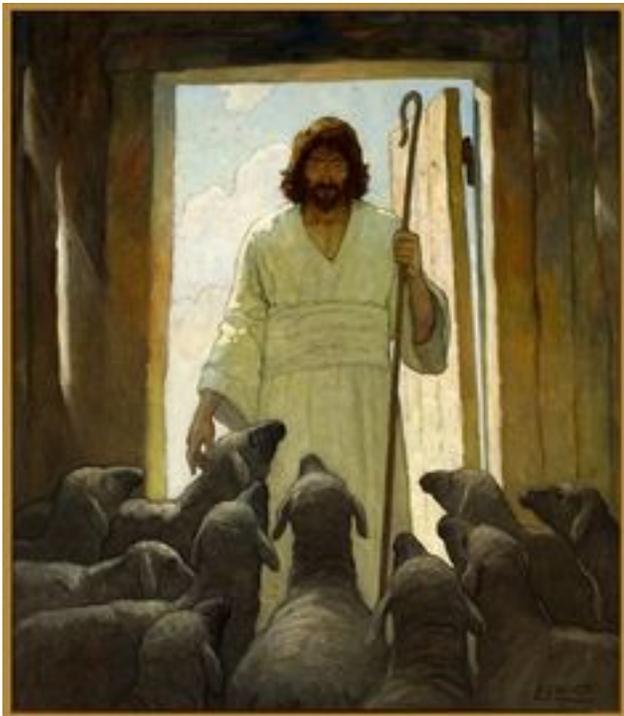
What have you learned about God from this passage?

What would you like to remember?

The New Testament gives a fuller picture of Jesus' role as the Good Shepherd.

John 10

14 "I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep, and my sheep know me. **15** They know me just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I give my life for the sheep. **27** "My sheep listen to my voice. I know them, and they follow me. **28** I give them eternal life, and they will never die. No one can steal them out of my hand. **29** My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than anyone. No one can steal them out of my Father's hand. **30** I and the Father are one."



List what the shepherd does for the sheep.

How do the sheep respond to the shepherd?

How do you feel about this kind of relationship with God?

Wyeth, N.C. The Good Shepherd. Ca. 1926/27 Oil on canvas, 114.2 x 101.5 cm. Kirkinth Hills. Bloomfield Hills, MI