

God, the Shepherd

Scripture Reading — Psalm 23

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.

Psalm 23:1 —

Shepherds lead sheep to food and water—and away from trouble. They correct sheep when they go off in the wrong direction. They protect sheep from predators. They gather together the sheep who have gotten scattered. They carry the sheep that are weak, and they tend to any wounds and sores the sheep may have.

To be a shepherd requires courage and compassion.

Psalm 23 has been recited so often in so many cultural contexts that it is easy for both brand-new and lifelong Christians to miss the force and beauty of this psalm's central image.

Imagine God, says Psalm 23, as a God of courage and compassion, a God of great strength and uncommon grace.

Thinking of God as being good but not altogether great leads us to a sentimental view of God. Thinking of God as being great but not altogether good leads us to a fearful view of God as a kind of tyrant. Neither matches the Bible's way of thinking.

When we imagine God, we need to imagine a God altogether good and altogether great—as good and great as a shepherd who fends off predators and nurtures the young and weak and tends to the hurt and sick.

May God give us all space and time today to meditate on this profound truth.

Prayer

Savior God, like a shepherd, lead us. Protect us even from predators we cannot see. When we are weak, carry us. And when we wander away, lead us home. In Jesus, Amen.

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