

September 11, 2016

Who is Your God?



Psalm 23:1

*"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
He leads me beside quiet waters,
He restores my soul.
He guides me in paths of righteousness
For his name's sake.*

*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil.
For you are with me;
Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me
In the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil;
My cup overflows.
Surely goodness and love will follow me
All the days of my life.
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."*

When I began this series several weeks ago I did so as a challenge to each of us to think about what we believe about our God. I wanted us to focus, not on the sometimes sterile characteristics of God that are, I think, too often taught and preached, but on our own individual and specific views of who God is and the role he plays in our lives.

We began with the God of Creation, the Elohim, who is the all powerful source of all things. We talked about God, the Adonai, our Lord and Master; God, the El Roi, who watches over us; God, the El Shaddai, all mighty and unailing; and God, Jehovah Jireh, who provides for our every need.

In Psalm 23, David uses many of these names for God to describe a wonderful, all encompassing relationship with our Father. He writes, *"The Lord is my shepherd..."* God, as my Jehovah Roi,, my shepherd, knows me personally, he wants to lead me unailingly, and he longs for me to follow him in perfect trust. (John 10) The relationship he calls he to share with him is intimate and individual.

David continues, "***I shall not want...***" As my Jehovah Jireh, God will provide perfectly for all my needs. He who knows the number of hairs on my head and sees when even a sparrow falls from the sky will provide everything that I need on a daily basis, if I will but follow him.

"He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside still waters..." Sheep, like all of us, don't react well to stress. Our good Shepherd, the Jehovah Shalom, knowing this about us, provides us with his perfect peace, "***...which transcends all understanding...***" guarding our hearts and minds, even in the most terrifying times.

"He restores my soul." Just as God healed his people Israel, and just as his Son healed the blind and the deaf, so will our Jehovah Rapha heal our troubled and wounded souls. ***"He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake."*** Instead of demanding that you and I live perfect lives where our salvation always hangs by a thread, our God, the Jehovah Tsidkenu, makes us righteous through the blood of his Son. In satisfying the requirement of the "Law of sin and death" for each and every one of us our God, in his grace, makes us righteous even when we are not.

"You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows." The kings of Israel, like David, who served over God's people were chosen specifically for that task by the Father, and in setting them apart or sanctifying them for this huge responsibility, he often provided for them to be anointed. (I Samuel 16) Our God, the Jehovah Mekaddishkem, sanctifies or sets us apart, not just as his servants, but as his adopted children. (Romans 8:12-17)

God, the Elohim, the Shaddai, the Roi and the Rapha, longs to lead us as a shepherd leads his sheep. He knows us intimately and he calls us by name to follow him along his paths. But like all good shepherds he will not drive us or force us to follow him. Instead, in perfect love, our God offers us the opportunity to become his children. So, can you and I can honestly and whole heartedly say, ***"The Lord is my Shepherd..."?***