

My Shepherd Knows Me



Annie

Scriptures:

John 10:14

Psalm 23

In today's vernacular, being called a sheep is often regarded as a derogatory label, yet, as followers of Jesus Christ we are honoured by God with this term. Living in New Zealand, we are used to seeing sheep in roadside paddocks, nibbling away at the grass, seemingly content with their lives, but we rarely see a shepherd. In ancient Israel, there were no electric fences to keep the sheep from straying, so the shepherd was their constant companion. And our wonderful God used this image of the shepherd, carefully guarding and watching over his sheep, to describe Christ's role in our lives.

Our Great Shepherd is all the love, comfort and protection that we could ever need in this fallen, broken world. Reading through Psalm 23 with fresh eyes, that are open to seeing more deeply what God desires us to see, reveals so much of the qualities and characteristics of Jesus Christ, our Great Shepherd. We see the nurturing Provider who ensures that we lack nothing of the food He would have us eat, the Living Bread, the Word who became flesh so that we could be His precious lambs forever.

As He leads us beside the still waters of His ever flowing Love, and we lay down in His green pasture, we realise more and more deeply that He gives us a peace that is inexpressible. We are in the presence of the only One who is our Hope in this life and throughout eternity, a Hope that never fails, that never gives up on us. This is our inheritance, His righteousness that we are offered as a perfect gift of Love, to live in and experience right now.

There are times when we need to be ready to accept and actively receive the strength that flows from our Great Shepherd, times when our path seems too scary, too steep, too exhausting and we begin to fold under the weight of these shadowy valleys. Our Shepherd is all the strength we could ever need, His nail scarred hands reach out to us and are ever willing and totally able to lift us up, wipe our weary tears and comfort us like no-one else can. Our Great and loving Shepherd, knows our fear, He knows our pain, He took it upon Himself on the cross at Calvary, He simply wants us to relinquish it to Him so that His strength fills us for every step of our journey.

We are the sheep of His flock, His precious lambs who He knows by name. All of us were errant sheep who He chose to pursue with one purpose, to bring us to the home where we belong. Through abundant goodness and mercy He has followed us into the mire and muddy waters of life in this world, He has called our name and reached out, gently, yet purposefully, setting our feet on a safe path. Our Good Shepherd has laid out a banquet for us, a sumptuous feast right here in the middle of the battlefield of our lives. He invites us to sit down and fill ourselves to overflowing with the One who dwells within each of His precious family, His flock, so that we overflow with the pure Oil of His Holy Spirit.

All of this amazing life is revealed in a Psalm written so long before the earthly birth of Jesus the Messiah, yet so full of what is available to us all when we let go of our grip on our own stubborn solutions to the issues we face in our lives. God has given these precious words to us so that we will see, albeit through our cloudy eyesight, just what it is that He longs for us to accept from Him - the promises of peace, hope, provision and strength that are already fulfilled in the Person of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. He delights to draw us ever closer into His flock, He revels in ensuring we are following our Good and Great Shepherd, walking in the paths He lays before us, trusting Him for every iota of all we could ever dream of.

Prayer: Abba Father, remind us every day of the amazing treasures that You have for us to discover as we follow our Good Shepherd, treasures of Your Peace, Your Provision, Your Strength and Your abundant, exuberant Love as we dwell with You forever and ever, Amen.