

# Bethel

## Prayer Meeting Addresses

### Number 56 Psalm 23

#### Reading: Psalm 23

1 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.  
3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.  
4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil:

for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth 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 for ever.

#### Address

If these blessings of Psalm 23 are fulfilled with us, then we shall be blessed indeed, in our homes, and in the church of God, in our solemn assemblies and personally in our hearts. So when we meet for prayer, these are some of the things to pray for. And then there will be that time of refreshing that shall come from the presence of the Lord.

If our religion is real, we want the Lord Jesus to be everything to us that a shepherd is to his sheep, and the reason is that the Spirit of God has taught us that we are like sheep. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." And left to ourselves, we still do. We still go astray; we still turn every one to our own way. You see the foolishness of the sheep, the weakness of the sheep, the readiness of the sheep to wander, to go astray. Now if our religion is real, we shall know, we shall feel all these things.

So we want the Lord Jesus to be to us everything that a shepherd is to his flock, especially this watching over us, guarding us, keeping us, supplying our needs. We need the Shepherd to do all these things for us. In one place, the Lord Jesus is called the good Shepherd, giving His life for the sheep; in another

place, the chief Shepherd who shall appear; in another place, the great Shepherd, “brought again from the dead ... through the blood of the everlasting covenant.” So that is what we want (isn’t it?) for the Lord Jesus to be our Shepherd. That is what we *want*, and then we can say, “I shall *not want*.”

Now it is not possible for me to give you an exposition of the twenty-third Psalm this evening, but we have it twice: “He leadeth me.” And that is real religion, that is vital godliness: He and me, Christ and a sinner. *He* in all His divine power, the riches of His grace; *me* in all my weakness, helplessness, sin and need. “He leadeth me.” O but it is that blessed point we mention so much, the Shepherd going before, and He *has* gone before, and He still goes before. That beautiful word: “When He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him.” O to see the risen Saviour going before and to have grace to follow!

“He leadeth me.” Then what about these green pastures? The good Shepherd knows where they are. The good Shepherd has provided them. “Green pastures.” The sheep need them that they might live and not die. The sheep need them that they might be satisfied. These green pastures. I take them to be the green pastures of the gospel, “the glorious gospel of the grace of God.” And the good Shepherd leads His sheep. He will never lead them into any pastures which are not green and He will never lead them into any pastures where there are poisonous weeds.

O the green pastures of the gospel are still green! These pastures were green when the first sinner saved by grace went to heaven, because Abel walked in these green pastures when by faith he saw the Lamb of God. He walked in them, and not only did he lie down in them, but he lived in them and he died in them and he went to heaven in them. They are still green; they have not withered. The truths of the gospel have not grown old or stale and if you are a sheep in Christ’s fold, there will be one thing that will mark it, and may you be able to hold it fast tonight: “My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, saith the Lord.” I repeat that. “My people” – the sheep of Christ’s fold – “shall be satisfied with My goodness, saith the Lord.” They are not disappointed in these green pastures. They do not want some different pastures. These green pastures will do for them to live in and to die in. The green pastures of the gospel, ever old, yet ever new.

But the sheep lie down here. Not only do they feed here. “He shall feed His flock like a shepherd.” Not only do they feed here; they lie down here. They

find a resting place here. Because as the sheep are led along by the shepherd in their pilgrimage, often they are weary and worn and footsore, and they lie down. They find rest in the green pastures. Surely these green pastures are beneath “the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.”

“Tell me, Saviour, from above,  
Dearest Object of my love,  
Where Thy little flocks abide,  
Sheltered near Thy bleeding side.”

“The shadow of a great rock in a weary land.” They lie down there in the green pastures, which I take to mean this in all its simplicity: they find a resting place there.

It seems a strange expression to us: He *makes* them lie down. An old shepherd said, “Have you ever tried to make a sheep lie down? It is not easy; it is hard.” He said that only the shepherd can make the sheep lie down. They will not lie down for anybody else, and if they are unwell, they will not lie down, and if they are frightened, they will not lie down. They need a shepherd’s tender care and loving compassion to make them lie down. Some of you have longed to lie down in the green pastures (haven’t you?) and you have not been able to yet. May the good Shepherd kindly *make you* lie down. O the resting place in the green pastures! “My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.” “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.” And the weary sheep says,

“O that I now the rest might know,  
Believe and enter in!”

And the voice of the Shepherd still sounds down the ages: “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” These are the things the sheep of Christ’s fold want, and these are the things we pray for, in secret and in our prayer meetings, here and at home.

And then these still waters. I take these to be the still waters of His everlasting love, that love which took Him to the cross, that forgiving, pardoning, saving love. “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.” And He leads them there. In all its fulness I take this to be the Shepherd, the Saviour, working by the Holy Spirit, glorifying Christ

and taking of the things of Jesus and showing them to the sinner. He is showing them where these waters of His eternal love are. You know where they begin: “Beneath the sacred throne of God.” You know how they flow: by the way of the cross. You know what wonderful streams they are.

“I stood amazed, and wondered when,  
Or why, this ocean rose,  
That wafts salvation down to men,  
His traitors and His foes.”

These are the streams of that river which “make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.” There are many things to make the sheep sad, but these streams make them glad.

“Still waters.” The margin says, “*the waters of quietness.*” Well, we would like to feel this. “The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” “In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.” The good Shepherd leading to the paths of righteousness, the green pastures, the still waters, the waters of quietness. There is an attraction in them, isn’t there? May we know them, seek them, find them, pray for them.

*This address was given at Bethel Chapel, Luton, by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom, on Monday, 29th June, 2009*