



and that's... **The Gospel Truth!!** with Pat Corn

a brief message of encouragement to make your day just a little bit brighter

“The Lord is my shepherd....” You probably recognize that statement from the Bible as the 23rd Psalm. Aside from John 3:16, the 23rd Psalm is one of the most recognizable pieces of scripture. I can't help but believe that there is a Godly dynamic involved with the 23rd Psalm that would allow even a small child to memorize those passages.

God exposed his virtues, nature, and character to the ancient Hebrews through his names. One of those names happens to be, Jehovah-Rohi. “I am the Lord thy God who is your Shepherd”. This name of God was given to the Hebrews by the Lord himself. They didn't just coin the phrase to represent Him, He said this of himself from the glories of heaven.

Now to many, the 23rd Psalm is a sweet, warm and fuzzy poem set with little perfectly clean, snow white Lamb Chops (Shari Lewis' puppet character, not a potential entrée) lying around in knee deep grass waiting for the Hallmark card company to come and snap their picture for a greeting card.

Nothing could be father from the truth. The land in Israel and the surrounding area was desolate for the most part; dry, dusty, with little to recommend it as a future tourist destination. God's statement that he is their shepherd expressed an entirely different picture. Those people understood the dynamics of being a true shepherd. Pastors today are commonly referred to as the “shepherd's of the flock”. No wonder pastor's are burning out and leaving the ministry in such volumes, being a true shepherd is an extremely tough job, particular when they have to deal with so many “fence runners” under their care.

In “shepherd-dom” there are two types of shepherds. The first type is the “manager” shepherds. This shepherd have no real connection to the flock. He is there to only maintain the flock and walk them through the yearly routine that is required of him. His flocks is not sensitive to his leadership. He's there to simply greet his payday and does only the minimal amount of effort to keep the job. Often manager shepherds have sickly and diseased flocks and lose a much larger proportion of the sheep to various types of prey as they wander along the yearly path. The manager shepherd just doesn't really care about the needs of the flock, and as a result, they rarely enjoy the benefit of his personal touch. This insecurity cause great strife and hunger in the lives of the sheep. They are always looking for “greener pastures” because of the deep hunger and thirst that exists in their lives. The flock reflects his lack of diligence in the way that they look and is evident to the general population.

The second type of shepherd is the “owner” shepherd. His care for his sheep is completely different. His greatest desire is that the sheep reflect his diligent care and love for them. He knows them each by name and works diligently to prepare the yearly movement routine to insure that they are well fed and don't experience thirst. Sheep are not intelligent creatures and he knows that he must lead them to where they are nourished and can rest with him or else they will do some pretty stupid stuff. He cares for each sheep daily by using his staff to comb through the wool and inspecting them for pests and parasites. He is a skilled marksman with his rod. The rod is a club of sorts that the shepherd can accurately throw to kick up dust and cause a wayward sheep to run back to the fold or cause another animal, who might be a threat, to run away. He carries an oily creosote-type substance to smear on the heads of the sheep in order to eliminate nematodes and parasites from entering their nostrils and eyes, otherwise their brains could be destroyed by infestation. This substance also makes them cause less damage to themselves

when they butt heads. This allows the sheep to rest since they will not lie down if there is strife between them. They maintain a defensive posture of standing rigidly if the strife isn't resolved.

He takes them from pasture to pasture to protect the land so that the land isn't overly grazed and is ready for them next year. Season by season he moves them from the lowlands to the higher ground where he has led them through the valley up the dangerous, craggy trails to a place called the "table". The table is the lush lands of the higher country where the area has been prepared by the shepherd to be free of any weeds or noxious plants that might harm them. He has also scouted out the predators of the area to insure that the flock is safe from harm as they frolic in the high grass of the table. Their defenses are down and he must protect them from their own reckless abandon.

He cares. That's the kind of shepherd I would like to follow and I can. Our Father is an Owner Shepherd and His divine diligence is in constant operation on our behalf. "His goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life...."

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