Easter 4/Good Shepherd 1 Samuel 17:34-37
May 3, 2020 436-766*-375-432
*CW-S – "The Lord's My Shepherd"

Go with Your Good Shepherd!
I. Recognize the hard work of your Good Shepherd.
II. Go with confidence in your Good Shepherd.

Dear Christian friends,

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall lack nothing." Psalm 23 is probably one of the BEST KNOWN – most beloved – passages in God's Word. We especially treasure it when **it feels as if** life is CRASHING DOWN all around us. We get ALL WORKED UP – worried – **upset** - **depressed**. Then we turn to those FAMILIAR words, ***"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want."*** We're reminded – I have my ***"Good Shepherd."*** HE will get me through this. We HAVE DAYS like that, right?

Israel and **King Saul** were having one of those days. Oh, Saul tells David, ***"Go, and the LORD be with you"*** but Saul was really thinking, "You're NUTS, David!" But for David THAT was his confidence. David KNEW the Lord was with him!

"Go and the LORD be with you." Learn from David – GO WITH YOUR GOOD SHEPHERD!" 1)Recognize the hard work of your Good Shepherd and 2)go with confidence in your Good Shepherd.

I. Recognize the hard work of your Good Shepherd.

These verses are part of the story of David and Goliath. David had been brought to **King Saul** as a POSSIBLE CHALLENGER to the giant. Saul was thinking to himself, "You've got to BE KIDDING!" He tells David, ***"You're not able to fight against this Philistine; you're only a boy."***

WAIT a minute! WHAT does **any of this** have to do with our being sheep of the ***"Good Shepherd"***? We can learn from David's words here the HARD WORK of being a **good shepherd**.

A shepherd has three basic jobs – to LEAD – FEED and DEFEND the flock. Think again of Psalm 23. ***"He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He leads me in paths of righteousness."*** A **good** shepherd doesn't lead his sheep to DRIED UP pasture or POLLUTED water. A **good** shepherd finds and leads his flock to ***"green pastures – quiet waters."***

A **good** shepherd also protects and defends his flock. Sheep are basically defenseless animals. They don't run very fast. They DON'T HAVE **sharp** teeth or claws or horns. WITHOUT a **good** shepherd a sheep is **pretty much** a helpless animal – an EASY MEAL for a **hungry** predator. That made being a **good** shepherd HARD and DANGEROUS work.

David knew that from PERSONAL EXPERIENCE. He tells Saul, ***"When a lion or a bear came and took a lamb from the flock, I went after it and struck it and rescued the lamb out of its mouth. When the lion reared up against me, I grabbed it by its mane, struck it, and killed it. Your servant struck both the lion and the bear."***

Put yourself in **that situation**! A bear or lion has taken one of your sheep. If a bear/lion does that that means it's a HUNGRY bear/lion. Do you really want to MESS WITH a **hungry** bear/lion – take its supper away from it? You don't have a **gun** – just your staff to WHOP it on its head. You're close enough to this bear/lion that when it turns on you you can grab it's ***"mane."*** Any VOLUNTEERS? Is your life WORTH SACRIFICING **to save** a sheep? Recognize from David the HARD WORK of being ***"Good Shepherd!"***

Jesus said in John 10, ***"The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. When (the hired hand) sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep."***

Do you see why the **Bible often** uses this picture of sheep/shepherd to describe our relationship with God? How we can BE SO LIKE sheep! We're basically defenseless against our **spiritual enemies**. ON OUR OWN how can we protect ourselves from our **sinful natures** and a world that hates **Christ** and **Christians**? The devil is ***"prowling around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour"*** and he has his eyes on us as a NICE, JUICY MEAL.

Isaiah wrote, ***"We all like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way."*** Like dumb sheep how we LOVE TO WANDER from our God and His ways. We get so busy munching the green grass of life that we don't even notice that we're STRAYING from our Good Shepherd. We don't see the DANGER **approaching** us. "Life is **good** – the grass is **green** – I'm ALRIGHT – this won't hurt me – I know WHAT I'M DOING – God will UNDERSTAND."

How much are we REALLY WORTH to God especially when we're honest about the **way we've treated** God? After going through another Lent and Holy Week – on a day like today! – **how** can we EVER DOUBT or **question** God's love for us? God sent His own Son to be our ***"Good Shepherd."*** Jesus left the glories of heaven and came here to ***"seek and to save that which was lost."*** Being our ***"Good Shepherd"*** was HARD WORK for Jesus. The devil came after Him with FANGS BARED and eyes **blazing**. The very people Jesus came to save didn't want to BE BOTHERED by Him. Yet Jesus persevered. Jesus lived for us the holy, perfect life we owed God but never could actually live.

Then came the CHOICE – Jesus' life OR our lives? Listen to Jesus in John 10, ***"I am the Good Shepherd; I lay down My life for the sheep."*** Jesus willingly laid down His life on the cross to PERSONALLY PAY for all our sins. Jesus was punished **in our place** that we might be forgiven **fully** and **freely**. Jesus endured the hell **we had coming** so we could live with Him forever in heaven.

Jesus went on in John 10, ***"I lay down My life – only to take it up again."*** We have a risen, living Lord Jesus. Our ***"Good Shepherd"*** PROMISES us, ***"My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of My hand."*** Only Jesus CAN MAKE AND KEEP a promise like that. Jesus actually has MADE that promise to us and He really will KEEP it. As sheep of the ***"Good Shepherd"*** we need ***"fear no evil"*** even when we ***"walk through the valley of the shadow of death."*** As sheep of the ***"Good Shepherd"*** we can joyfully sing, ***"You are with me - and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever."*** Jesus has already done the HARD WORK of saving us.

That Jesus is our ***"Good Shepherd"*** gives us confidence **as we go** through life.

II. With confidence in your Good Shepherd.

Recall the situation here. The **Philistines** – Israel's ARCH-ENEMY – had invaded Israel. The **two armies** were facing off against each other. The giant Goliath had challenged the Israelites. Instead of all the **men fighting** each other it would be just Goliath and WHOMEVER the Israelites chose. Whoever WON– **his army** won. Whoever lost – **his country** lost. Twice a day – for 40 straight days! – Goliath had paraded in front of the Israelites and taunted them with **his challenge**. The result? ***"Saul and all the Israelites were discouraged and terrified. They ran from him in great fear."***

Meanwhile David's dad sent David to CHECK ON David's **three brothers** who were in the army. David hears Goliath mocking the Israelites AND Israel's God. Nobody was WILLING to stand up for God and take on the giant. **Nobody** EXCEPT David.

David was brought to Saul. Saul's thinking, "**David**, there's NO WAY you'll ever beat Goliath. It's hopeless." That **actually was** an HONEST and REALISTIC assessment of the situation but with one

BIG FLAW – it totally ignored God. **Saul** and the **others** saw the giant Goliath but they DIDN'T SEE ***"the LORD"*** – their ***"Good Shepherd."***

But David saw Him. David tells Saul, ***"The LORD, who delivered me from the lion and the bear, will deliver me from this Philistine."*** David remembered what GOD HAD DONE for him **in the past** and that gave David confidence to GO and TAKE ON Goliath. Note well WHERE David's **confidence was**. It wasn't, "I KILLED the bear and the lion" but ***"the LORD, who delivered me from the lion and the bear*** will save me this time too." **David's confidence** was NOT in himself but IN his ***"Good Shepherd."***

David doesn't wear any **armor**. He doesn't use a sword or **spear**. He tells Goliath, ***"I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. The battle is the LORD's, and He will give you into our hands."*** Then with his simple slingshot David killed Goliath.

Learn from David and GO with confidence in your **Good Shepherd**. Like David REMEMBER WHAT your ***"living God"*** has **all done** for you. He loves us – He saves us – He died for us – He rose triumphant – He's redeemed and **forgiven** us. Remember ALL THAT your **Good Shepherd** has PROMISED you – to be with you always – to hear and **answer** all your prayers – to work all things for our eternal good – to bring us safely home to eternal life in heaven.

Like David understand that our PROBLEMS ARE REAL. **Goliath** really was a REALLY BIG giant. There was no way David could take on Goliath ALL BY HIMSELF. Like David understand that **our God** is ALSO REAL and God is bigger than **any situation** or **problem** we may face. Our problems are **often** bigger than WE CAN HANDLE but they are never too big for our God. DON'T DO **like these Israelites** and see only the **"giant problem."** Do like David and SEE BOTH the **big problem** and our EVEN BIGGER **Good Shepherd**. God has already saved us from sin, death, the devil, hell. Any other problems we may have are SMALL POTATOES for Him.

Like those Israelites our problems can terrify and OVERWHELM us. We can feel hopeless – it's a LOST CAUSE. Maybe our problem is OVERCOMING a pet sin we've **struggled with** for years. Maybe it's a sinful addiction to gambling – drugs – drinking too much – pornography. Maybe it's a marital or **family problem** – or learning to live CONTENTEDLY with **major health problems** that just won't go away. Maybe it's worrying and getting worked up about things **instead** of TRUSTING GOD to be in control and take care of us AS HE'S PROMISED. The problems vary **from person** to person but they are never TOO BIG or TOO MUCH for our Good Shepherd to handle. Like David GO CONFIDENT that ***"the LORD, who delivered David from the lion and the bear (and Goliath!), will deliver (us)"*** until we are SAFELY HOME with Him in heaven. Amen.

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